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MARCH AGAINST RACISM
SATURDAY 17 MARCH, LONDON, GLASGOW AND CARDIFF

Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2592 | 21-27 February 2018 | socialistworker.co.uk

40,000 EDUCATION WORKERS TAKE ON BOSSES AND TORIES

IT'S RIGHT TO STRIKE



by **JOSH HOLLANDS**, UCU rep and postgraduate teaching assistant, University College London

THIS WEEK we'll be taking part in the biggest strike in Britain since the junior doctors' strike. And we plan escalating strikes over the next three weeks, ending with a five-day strike in March.

We're out because our pensions are

under attack. At the moment we've got a defined benefit scheme.

That means you know what you'll pay in and you know what you'll get out.

But our bosses want to change that to a defined contribution one. That means we know what we'll pay in, but we'll have no idea what we'll get out.

We'll be relying on how well

the scheme does on the markets. Would you trust the markets with your pension or like to wake up checking the markets to see how much you've lost?

People might think that university workers are all >>>continued on page 3

PALESTINE

Israel threatens attack on Gaza, and war with Iran

ISRAEL IS threatening a new and bloody war on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. They already suffer from a deepening humanitarian crisis.

The tightening siege on Gaza is aimed at isolating Hamas, which has not only led resistance but has also had backing from Iran.

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NO TO RACISM



Another victory for anti-fascists in Rotherham

HASEEB ALAM and Mahroof Sultan walked free last week after an ordeal lasting well over two years. Charges of violent disorder were thrown out after the prosecution offered no evidence at Sheffield Crown Court.

Rotherham 12 campaigners ask why the defendants were arrested in the first place.

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AUSTERITY

Fighting back against local government cuts

BIRMINGHAM council has said it will close a day care centre for adults.

Salford council in Greater Manchester wants to close five nurseries.

In both cases people are fighting back against Labour councils passing on Tory cuts.

>>Pages 3 and 16

Josh Hollands



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'What's this poor chap here? Faint air of a Labour backbencher'

Foreign secretary **Boris Johnson** on viewing a monkey head while on a tour of illegally poached animals

'You will be afraid to roll 10p into the RNLI tin in case it spends it on bats for clubbing seals'

Jeremy Clarkson criticises the "lynching" of Oxfam workers.

'Please don't pretend two dads is the new normal'

Richard Littlejohn continues his campaign to be the worst thing in the Daily Mail

'Corbyn has a long and blinkered history as an apologist for Britain's bloodiest enemies'

Trevor Kavanagh in the Sun

'I'm going to jolly well get on and do it'

Theresa May again says she is staying



Would the last person to lead Ukip please turn the lights off

THE RACIST Ukip party has got its seventh change in leader in less than one and a half years. Gerard Batten became interim leader following a vote to sack Henry Bolton at an emergency general meeting last Saturday.

The meeting was strained to say the least. The Financial Times reported that Bolton attacked the "enemy within" for undermining him.

An NEC member said Bolton had threatened legal action against Ukip at least twice.

Another said Bolton had breached his duties by telling the press that Ukip is losing between £20,000 and £30,000 a month.

Bolton had refused to step down following his girlfriend, Jo Marney, sending a



WAKE UP sheepie

series of racist messages. He whined that the "scrutiny" of his personal life was on a par with how the media treated princess Diana, conveniently ignoring the racism.

But it's clear that overt

racism in Ukip will continue.

Batten began his stint by repeating his claim that Islam is a "death cult". "If you look at every continent in the world where you have this belief, then you

have violence," he went on.

He seems to have missed the fact that a number of other religions also exist in areas where there is violence.

He said Muslims should sign a document rejecting "dark-age ideologies" in the Koran.

On the plus side, Ukip is broke.

A judge last week instructed it to contribute to Ukip MEP Jane Collins' legal costs.

Three Rotherham Labour MPs sued Collins after she claimed that they deliberately ignored child sexual abuse. Ukip could have to pay at least £200,000.

Bolton previously said that a new leadership election was financially "unviable" and could mark the end of the party.

AS A senior officer responsible for a Royal Navy training course, Commander Justin Codd was supposed to be teaching students how to safely navigate a nuclear submarine. Instead, he took his eye off the periscope and ended up putting a £2.1 million dent in his vessel. A court martial at Portsmouth naval base ruled that Commander Codd should have paid more attention. The students passed.

A sinking boat

THAMES VALLEY police have suggested that members of the public might have to pay for its mounted unit. We do already. But cops say they have a funding gap of £4 million. The pigs are hoping that the nine horses—rather than being dog food—will continue their important crime fighting on a charitable basis.

New new trains to replace old new trains

THE WINDSOR line out of London's Waterloo has nice trains.

Built by Siemens they are Desiro City Class 707 and only entered service in the past few months.

Since privatisation trains are owned and maintained by one lot of companies but operated by another. That's where the money is made.

South West Trains decided to order them in 2014 to expand the Waterloo fleet. The last of the order arrives next week.

But despite the fact that trains are built to last at least 30 years they will be out of service by next year.

The franchise changed hands to FirstGroup.



An old new train

It is cheaper for them to get an entirely new batch of rolling stock than to continue with the old "new" ones. They are not the only ones.

Greater Anglia is ditching the Bombardiers it leased from Macquarie to run the Stansted Express despite them being only six years old.

Tory politicians for sale to Russian banker

Troublemaker's prestigious hypocrite award goes to defence secretary Gavin Williamson.

Williamson took time out of a Nato meeting in Brussels to try to breathe life into the attempt to whip up a scandal about Jeremy Corbyn's meeting with a diplomat in 1986.

He said, "Jeremy Corbyn has never had Britain's interests at heart."

"Time and time again he has sided with those who want to destroy everything that is great about this country, whether it is sympathising with terrorists, backing rogue regimes, or cosying up



A Tory donkey

to those who want to inflict pain and misery on the British people."

Meanwhile banker Lubov Chernukhin, whose husband Vladimir was Russia's deputy finance minister, bought access to Williamson at the Tories' Black and White Ball the other week.

Corbyn clearly doesn't think big enough.

Nick Gibb

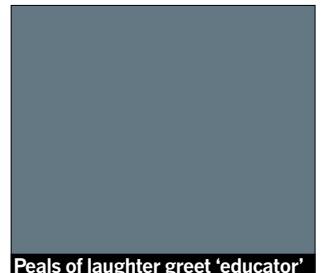
Testing times for minister

TORY SCHOOLS minister Nick Gibb is leading a traditionalist drive to replace modern teaching methods with old fashioned drilling.

His latest gimmick is to make all eight and nine year olds sit computer-based tests to see whether they know their times tables up to 12.

If they do, then they'll be one step ahead of him. Repeatedly asked to do a couple of simple sums on television he refused to answer.

That embarrassment comes hot on the heels of a major blow to Gibb and his allies (see below) in the "neo-traditionalist" education movement.



Peaches of laughter greet 'educator'

Danger of little knowledge

THE TORIES have been on a crusade to return to a "knowledge-based curriculum".

It was an obsession of Michael Gove's and the flame is now being carried by schools minister Nick Gibb. A private university launched a knowledge-based teacher training course last year.

The programme director is Robert Peal, a history teacher at the West London Free School, which was founded by Toby Young.

Peal also spent a 12-month secondment at the Department for Education where he acted as a policy adviser and speech writer to Gibb.

Gibb recently gave a speech titled, "The importance of knowledge-based education."

It's a shame Peal's course has been discontinued just five months after its launch.

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Circulation 020 7840 5601



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Campaign to fight Labour council's nursery closures

by SARAH BATES

OVER 250 parents, nursery workers and trade unionists vowed to stop nursery closures in Salford, Greater Manchester, at a meeting last Saturday.

Labour-run Salford council wants to close all five council-run Sure Start nurseries in the area, claiming it doesn't have the cash to keep them running.

The cuts would mean compulsory redundancy for 106 low-paid nursery workers.

The Unison union members were only told of the plans when the consultation began on 9 February—despite the council knowing for a long time before that.

All five nurseries are rated outstanding by government inspector Ofsted. They care for around 350 children, many with special educational needs.

The closures represent a cut of £1.5 million. But the council simply blames the Tory government's cuts to local authority budgets.

Rated

In the event of a closure only nine nurseries rated outstanding would remain in Salford—all of them privately run.

For many parents the closures would mean paying more and travelling further for worse quality care.

Parent Elizabeth Longwill responded to the news by setting up an online petition calling on the council to rethink the consultation.

She told Socialist Worker that the closures are “short signed and unimaginative”.

“The nurseries make such a difference, the staff are supportive and my daughter loves it,” she said.

“It's going to be more expensive to put her somewhere else.

“But it's more than that—the



Rebecca Long-Bailey

nursery has rooted me in the community. Salford is being regenerated which should be lifting everyone up—but working families have been left to sink.”

Rebecca Long-Bailey, Labour MPs for Salford and Eccles, told the

SALFORD MAYOR Paul Dennett faces resistance

packed meeting that she “will do anything I can” to stop the closures.

She called for setting up a “task-force” and said some services such as holiday clubs could take place inside nurseries to make them “more financially viable”.

Implored

Ameen Hadi from Salford Unison said campaigners are demanding the “council withdraws the consultation and fight with us against central government for the money”.

He implored Labour councillors, “If you're willing to fight the government we are willing to stand with you.”

The campaign will have to escalate if the council doesn't withdraw the plans—and workers need to get ready for strikes. Parents are frustrated that

a Labour council is making these cuts. Elizabeth explained, “Labour was instrumental in setting up these Sure Start centres.

“They turn around and say it's Tory cuts, but we have a Labour mayor and a Labour council.

“This has angered me on a personal level, but it's on a national level too.

“People can only take so much. I don't think we have to accept that things are going to get worse.

“I will take the fight to the Tories if I have to. If we have to march on Westminster we will.”

What's your story?

Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

Pressure beats cuts in Lewisham

HEALTH campaigners are celebrating after they forced Labour-run Lewisham council to reverse hundreds of thousands of pounds in cuts to children's mental health services.

The council had slashed £94,000 from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Camhs) in the south east London borough in 2016. It planned to snatch a further £150,000 during the next two years.

But Labour mayor Steve Bullock announced at a cabinet meeting last Wednesday that £100,000 of the cuts would be reversed.

Maggie Palmer, a Unite union rep and Camhs worker in Lewisham, was part of setting up the campaign. “There was so much pressure building on the council in the run-up to it,” she told Socialist Worker.

“We emailed all the Labour councillors and targeted those councillors who are on important committees.”

“There was a split within the council and the scrutiny



Maggie confronts Steve Bullock

committee agreed to send a message to the mayor.”

All three Labour MPs in the area supported the campaign. And shadow health secretary Jon Ashworth sent a message of support to a campaign meeting earlier this month.

The Labour Party has taken up mental health as a part of its campaigning—and many councillors now call for “ring fencing”.

Labour councils should fight for more resources, not just cry foul at the Tories and play different services off each other.

Lewisham council was set to hear a report on Wednesday on making equivalent cuts elsewhere from the children's budget.

Without a campaign of workers and parents, the council would not have been forced to reverse the cuts.

It should be used to inspire resistance to any further attacks.

We're right to go on strike

>>>continued from page 1

rich professors. But it's not like that. There are more and more staff on casual contracts and on low pay.

And this isn't only about our pension scheme. There's a bigger attack going on.

Our bosses, and the Tory government, want universities to be run like businesses.

That means making money comes before everything else.

We are fighting for a different vision of education.

Education should be there for

ordinary people, not to serve the interests of big business.

That's why we've got support from students, from other trade unionists and from campaigners. We've had loads of people join the union because we're fighting back—and we know that we can win.

This week some teachers are striking against academies. And 16 further education colleges start strikes next week.

You should back us too—and join our demonstration alongside striking further education lecturers on 28 February in London.

For details of the demo turn to pages 10&11



Breakfast in



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For updates and analysis on the stories that matter go to socialistworker.co.uk/breakfastinred



Racist laws to blame for hundreds drowned in a single month

by TOMÁŠ TENGYEL-EVANS

IN A chilling confirmation of the murderous cost of border controls, figures released last week showed that at least 404 refugees died trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea in the first six weeks of 2018.

The analysis by the United Nations International Organisation for Migration says that this toll is double the number of refugees who drowned between 1 January and 16 February last year.

The agency also says that more than 1,200 child migrants have died since 2014. Nearly half died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean. And, says the IOM, “the real figure is likely to be much higher”.

Refugee arrivals into Europe dropped from 12,430 in the same period last year to 8,407.

But deaths have increased because of the European Union’s (EU) dirty deal with Turkey that has forced refugees to take more dangerous routes.

The deal, signed in March 2016 with British support, means that refugees can be deported from Greece to Turkey.

Refugees

Previously refugees from the war-torn Middle East used to travel across the Aegean Sea into Greece, through the Balkans and then into western Europe. That route is now blocked.

Refugees are still fleeing war, poverty, catastrophic climate change and dictatorship.

The biggest rise in arrivals is from Eritrea in East Africa—up from just 16 last year to 1,184.

The country has been ruled by president Isaias Afwerki, a national liberation hero turned dictator, since it won independence from Ethiopia in 1991.

Tens of thousands are fleeing the country’s harsh military service laws which mean working class people can be conscripted for life.

Afwerki responded to protests last November with brutal repression, forcing more people out of

BACK STORY

Refugees and migrants seeking to reach Europe face increasingly hazardous journeys

● The UN’s International Organisation for Migration (IOM) says 404 refugees died trying to cross the Mediterranean between 1 January and 14 February.

● In addition, the IOM says that 1,200 child refugees have died since 2004.

● Defending refugees is a key issue for the 17 March anti-racism demonstrations in Britain.

the country. Eritrea is also in the middle of a dangerous imperialist power play between the Western-backed Egyptian dictatorship and Turkey.

Any escalation of tensions will mean more refugees into Europe.

Yet the EU’s response is to keep refugees locked out through “Fortress Europe”.

And if they do make it across the Mediterranean, many remain stuck at Britain’s border in Calais, trapped by millions of pounds’ worth of barbed wire, bullets and tear gas (see page 9).

Border

The only solution is to force the British government to open the border.

That’s one of the reasons why anti-racists are planning to join national demonstrations in London, Glasgow and Cardiff on 17 March.

Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) supporters are holding rallies, public meetings and film showings to build across Britain in the run up to them.

Around 50 people joined the first SUTR meeting in Liverpool on Sunday.

The 17 March demonstrations are an important part of building a mass movement against racism.

As Dan Lewis, CWU union North West chair, told the meeting in Liverpool, “By going out on the 17 March you are changing the world by standing up to racism”.



A RESCUE worker marks another death in the Mediterranean

PICTURE: MEDICINS SANS FRONTIERES

Catalonian movement fights Islamophobia and antisemitism

WHEN ANTI-RACISTS take to the streets in London, Glasgow and Cardiff on 17 March they will be part of actions across many countries.

Unity Against Fascism and Racism (UCFR) in Catalonia is the sister movement of Stand Up To Racism.

The political situation in Catalonia over recent months has of course been dominated by the struggle for an independent republic and the Spanish state’s opposition to that struggle.

Weakened

Fascist organisations had been much weakened by UCFR’s campaigning.

They lost almost all their councillors in Catalonia in the last municipal elections, and a neo-Nazi centre in Barcelona was shut down thanks to a powerful local UCFR campaign.

But fascist attacks are now at a record level.

UCFR includes people with many different ideas about independence. But we are united

“We’re marching against racism on 17 March...”

UCFR in Catalonia



trying to establish themselves through protests against a new mosque.

Roger, a victim of a fascist attack last year and a leading activist in the local UCFR group that was built subsequently, said, “As a working class we cannot allow our neighbourhoods to be a breeding ground for fascism.”

“We have to organise a real, inclusive movement in our areas so as to leave no physical or political space for fascism.”

Laura, a member of the anticapitalist network Marx21 who is helping to build UCFR in her rural town, explained, “UCFR can act to bring very diverse people together. This also includes international solidarity.”

“It is not just about the specific problems in Catalonia but about the global growth of racist movements.”

“That’s why it’s so important to show our strength everywhere, on the same day.”

David Karvala, member of Marx21 and an activist in UCFR in Barcelona

in the need to stop the fascists, as well as the Islamophobia, antisemitism and other forms of racism that are also growing.

Only last week, antisemitic graffiti appeared on Barcelona’s oldest synagogue, and there are Islamophobic incidents on a regular basis.

The 17 March demonstration will go through the centre of Nou Barris, a working class area of Barcelona where fascists are

Dregs of the far right join veterans’ Newcastle demo

Anti-racists mobilised against the Veterans Against Terrorism (VAT) in Newcastle last Saturday.

The march was supported by the racist Football Lads Alliance (FLA) and Nazi groups such as the North East Infidels. The racists turned out around 350 supporters and anti-racists brought out some 160 against them.

This disparity underlines the danger if the left doesn’t take the FLA seriously because it’s not a fascist organisation.

Deflect

The FLA posed as simply being against “terrorism”, but has become increasingly openly racist towards Muslims. Its leadership has increasingly targeted the left and anti-racists, such as shadow home secretary Diane Abbott. FLA leaders aim to build a racist, populist movement on the streets.

Weyman Bennett,



Opposing the racist march

PICTURE: SUTR NORTH EAST

co-convenor of Stand Up to Racism, told those opposing VAT and the FLA, “We are here because of those people who want to sow the seeds of division and hatred.”

VAT leader Richard Inman is a right wing Christian fundamentalist who believes “the entire Muslim religion is the antichrist”.

He is also a supporter of fascist Tommy Robinson and supported a march

that targeted East London Mosque last October.

With the Tories in crisis and the collapse of Ukip, the right is in flux and could regroup around another formation. The whole of the left needs to take the threat of the FLA seriously.

Anti-racists in the West Midlands should come out to oppose the FLA when it marches in Birmingham on Saturday 24 March.

Another fake ‘Trojan Horse’

THE Telegraph newspaper has apologised and agreed to pay costs and damages over an article that wrongly claimed there was an Islamist “Trojan Horse” plot at a primary school.

Nasim Ashraf and Hafizan Zaman were accused of plotting a “campaign of intimidation” to take over Clarksfield

Primary School in Oldham with the “aim of imposing an aggressive and separatist agenda” on students.

The Telegraph said last week, “We accept that such allegations are unfounded.”

Ashraf said, “We are very pleased that The Telegraph has apologised for what it accepts are completely false

allegations.

“Hafizan and I have done nothing but positively contribute in a society, which regrettably, finds many reasons to divide community.”

“Our struggle for justice shall continue until we have been vindicated by other media outlets who have also churned out similar defamatory allegations against us.”

Build the demos! Come to a rally

Mobilising events for national demonstrations on Saturday 17 March. Go to bit.ly/SUTRallies for speakers and more rallies

BIRMINGHAM
Thursday 1 March,
7pm, The Priory
Rooms, 40 Bull
St, B4 6AF.

MANCHESTER
Thursday 1 March,
7pm, Friends
Meeting House,
6 Mount Street,
M2 5NS.

**LONDON
NEWHAM**
Friday 2 March,
7pm, St John’s
Church, Broadway,
Stratford E15 1NG

**LONDON
HARINGEY**
Saturday 3 March,
4pm, Wightman
Road Mosque,
389 Wightman
Road, N8 0NA.

**LONDON
ISLINGTON**
Monday 5 March,
7pm, Finsbury Park
Mosque, N4 2QH

SHEFFIELD
Wednesday 7
March, 7pm,
Central United
Reformed Church,
60 Norfolk
St, S1 2JB

NEWCASTLE
Saturday 10 March,
1pm Newcastle
Arts Centre, Black
Swan Yard,
67 Westgate
Road, NE1 1SG

HACKNEY
Monday 12 March,
7.30pm, Halkevi
Community
Centre 33 Dalston
Lane, E8 2PE

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

CORBYN SPY SMEARS SHOW OUR RULERS’ FEAR

THE RIGHT wing papers think they’ve caught Jeremy Corbyn red handed.

They’ve whipped themselves up into a frenzy over unfounded allegations that the Labour leader gave information to a spy from Stalinist Czechoslovakia in the 1980s. And they hope this will check the rise of the left.

The smears about Corbyn are nothing new.

The Daily Mail published the Zinoviev Letter four days before the 1924 general election. It was a forgery that said Russia was planning Communist subversion if Labour was re-elected.

In the 1970s MI5 ran a propaganda campaign, known as Clockwork Orange, to smear Irish Republicans and the Labour Party. It forged Labour leaflets and pamphlets, some calling for revolution.

And in 1980 Rupert Murdoch’s Sunday Times ran a false story claiming that Labour leader Michael Foot was a Russian spy.

The latest round of allegations began when The Sun “obtained”—and mistranslated—a document

written by Jan Sarkocy. In the 1980s Sarkocy was lieutenant Jan Dymic of the State Security, known as the “Eshtebe”, and was posing as a diplomat at the Czechoslovak embassy.

Sarkocy met Corbyn three times in the House of Commons. The spy master found out that the left wing Labour MP was “negative towards the USA and the current politics of the Conservative government”.

During the Cold War, Russia and the Eastern Bloc contacted supporters of movements against Western imperialism in order to push their own agendas.

As Corbyn was an ardent campaigner for British

Pressures to deliver meant spies talked up—and made up—achievements

unilateral nuclear disarmament, Czechoslovak spooks would have been interested in him.

But Svetlana Ptacnikova, who runs the Czech Republic’s security service archives, said, “Mr Corbyn was neither registered as a collaborator, nor does his collaboration stem from archive documents.”

Pressures to deliver meant spies talked up—and made up—their achievements.

The Eshtebe’s primary role was to spy on Czechoslovak citizens. They were less successful at the international spying bit.

Claiming Corbyn as his informant would make Sarkocy look important to his bosses in Prague—and it would make them seem important to their masters in Moscow.

Similarly newspaper editors reassure themselves with fantasies about the “Commie” Corbyn.

The right don’t care if the smears are true. They are throwing dirt because they feel threatened by the prospect of a left wing Labour government and the growth of socialist ideas.

“We can make our rulers’ paranoid fears of socialist revolution a reality.

LESSON OF KFC COCK UP

A SUPPLY-CHAIN cock up at KFC fast food stores left bosses in a flap on Monday.

Chicken wasn’t delivered to many of the firm’s 900 poultry stores. Some 575 closed—potentially leaving workers unpaid.

The crisis has left bosses pecking their brains.

They had changed delivery firms from Bidvest to outsourcers DHL. That bird-brained decision cost 255 jobs.

Now fried chicken bosses have fallen fowl of the consequences.

The story also shows how fragile the bosses’ power is.

Increasingly production and logistics are designed to be just-in-time.

Firms order the exact amount of food they need for a day, it gets delivered, workers cook and serve it. This way, bosses avoid holding stock in storage that they pay ground rent on.

The process makes their businesses more profitable—and more vulnerable. One slip up in the chain leaves the profit

machine broken, and bosses with egg on their face.

And the leaner production becomes, the more flavoursome the potential prospects for workers.

Distribution is increasingly concentrated into massive centres, meaning workers have an increasing amount of power.

A day’s strike can leave food rotting and bosses’ nest eggs cracked.

Workers have the power to bring the entire system to a halt.

Celebrate resistance with Socialist Worker this May Day

May Day is a chance to celebrate working class solidarity against the bosses and resistance to oppression. Every year Socialist Worker produces a special supplement of May Day greetings from our readers in trade unions, colleges and campaigns. Make sure to get yours in by **Tuesday 10 April**

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ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Syrian tragedy risks big imperialist clash

SYRIA IS undoubtedly the most dangerous place in the world at the moment.

This is partly because of the endless killing in the multifaceted war that continues there. But it's also because the rivalries among regional and global powers that drive the fighting could spill over into something much bigger.

In this tragic land, powerful military systems keep bumping against each other. At the end of the week before last, Israel attacked an Iranian drone base across the border in Syria. One Israeli plane was shot down by Syrian air defences, provoking further Israeli attacks on Syrian and Iranian targets.

Then last week the Russian foreign ministry confirmed that five Russians were killed and more injured by US air and missile strikes. Reports say hundreds of Russian and Syrian forces were killed or injured in the clash.

President Vladimir Putin decisively intervened in the Syrian civil war in September 2015 to save the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and Russian forces are still active in Syria.

But many of the Russians killed recently are private mercenaries. Apparently they include fighters who helped to carve out Russian-backed enclaves in southeastern Ukraine in 2014.

Russia and Iran are the two biggest winners of the wars in Syria and Iraq. Iran props up both Assad and the predominantly Shia Muslim government in Iraq. The Russian intervention has complicated the situation in Syria. The Iranian regime is trying to cash in on the Syrian alliance with various deals, but the regime is holding out to attract Russian and Chinese investment.

The main losers in Syria are of course the people themselves and the revolutionaries of 2011. Isis too has lost its strongholds in Syria, though some version of its jihadi politics will undoubtedly survive.

The other loser is the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He strongly backed the 2011 revolution and hoped to see Islamists like him take over in Syria. Not only has he totally failed to achieve this objective, but he faces a powerful armed Kurdish presence in northeastern Syria.

Seized

Assad pulled out of these areas, which were seized by the Kurdish nationalist People's Protection Units (YPG). They are allied to the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), which has been fighting the Turkish state for the past generation.

Erdogan reacted by scrapping peace negotiations with the PKK and mounted a renewed offensive against the Kurdish areas in Turkey.

But he hasn't been able to stop the YPG-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) playing a leading role in defeating Isis. This is partly because of the ideological commitment and military capabilities of the YPG, but they have also enjoyed massive support from the US.

The US has found the Kurdish-led forces its most reliable ally in fighting Isis in Syria.

Now that Isis has gone, the other players in the Syrian game are trying to move in on the Kurdish-controlled areas. The US strikes that killed Russians were directed against an Assad regime offensive against the Kurdish-controlled towns of Khusham and Salhiya.

In late January Turkish forces entered Syria to attack, in conjunction with its proxies, another Kurdish enclave around Afrin. Once again this risks military clashes among big powers. The US has announced it is keeping some 2,000 troops in northeastern Syria to support the SDF.

At the end of last week Rex Tillerson, the US secretary of state, flew into Turkey to meet Erdogan and other leading officials. Afterwards he announced the two governments were going to "lock arms" in northern Syria. What does this mean? Both Turkey and the US say they're against Isis, but there are stories of ex-ISIS fighters participating in the Turkish assault on Afrin.

The real sticking point remains the YPG. Erdogan wants them and their US backers out of the ancient north Syrian town of Manbij. Tillerson just promised to "work on" this.

And now there are reports that the YPG has reached an agreement for the Syrian army to enter the Afrin region to help repel the Turkish offensive. The dangerous power struggle over Syria's bloody corpse will continue.

TANKS OF the Israeli Defence Force target the Gaza Strip

Israel threatens new assault on Gaza—and war with Iran

by NICK CLARK

ISRAEL IS threatening a new and bloody war on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip who are already suffering from a deepening crisis.

Israeli tank fire killed two Palestinian teenagers close to Gaza's border with Israel last Saturday night.

The killings were caused by a renewed barrage of shelling and airstrikes on Gaza launched this weekend.

The Israeli military boasted of carrying out six "large-scale attacks" on Gaza involving tanks and jets. It claimed to have struck 18 targets linked to the Palestinian resistance group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip.

It comes shortly after UNRWA—the United Nations body for Palestinian refugees—slammed Israel and the US for Gaza's crisis.

Besieged

Israel is tightening its stranglehold on the Gaza Strip, which it has besieged for more than a decade.

It is backed by the US, which recently cut funding to UNRWA to punish Palestinians for opposing Donald Trump's claim that Jerusalem is Israel's capital.

UNRWA said the siege had turned Gaza into a "time bomb," nearing total collapse. Crippling fuel shortages

meant three Gaza hospitals and 16 medical centres had to suspend operations earlier this month.

And power cuts lasting up to 12 hours at a time means water goes untreated.

The latest assault comes after four Israeli soldiers were caught in an explosion attempting to remove a Palestinian flag near the border.

They were injured by a homemade bomb after entering Gaza to remove the flag, said to have been planted during a demonstration.

In response Israeli defence minister Avigdor Lieberman promised a drawn out military operation to "eliminate" the resistance groups he claimed were responsible.

Border

Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu warned, "The incident on the Gaza border is very serious."

"We will respond appropriately".

On Sunday Netanyahu also threatened a direct attack on Iran.

He said Iran was "the greatest threat to the world," and that it "champions a master faith" just as the Nazis "championed a master race".

And waving what he claimed to be a part of an Iranian drone shot down last week Netanyahu warned, "do not test Israel's resolve".

Netanyahu's threats are linked to Israeli attempts to push back Iran, which has gained a foothold in neighbouring Syria (see left).

The tightening siege on Gaza is aimed at isolating Hamas, which has not only led resistance but has also had backing from Iran.

Thousands of Palestinians could suffer and die as a result.

Binyamin Netanyahu

Bent business bribes

ISRAELI PRIME minister Binyamin Netanyahu's threats against Gaza and Iran come as he faces at least four major corruption scandals.

Israeli police recommended last week that Netanyahu be charged for accepting bribes.

He is said to have taken gifts worth some £200,000 in return for political favours.

In another scandal Netanyahu allegedly offered to push legislation limiting the growth of one Israeli newspaper in return

for favourable coverage from one of its rivals.

Yet another scandal involves the bribery of government officials during a sale of German submarines to Israel.

And Sara Netanyahu, Binyamin's wife, is also to stand trial over claims that she used public money to furnish the family's private home.

When in trouble Netanyahu has often relied on military threats and racist rhetoric to bolster his support in Israel—a society founded on racism against Arabs.

**Got a story?**

Email ideas to reports@socialistworker.co.uk

‘We’ve had a terrible ordeal due to the cops’

The last two Rotherham 12 defendants are free in a landmark case for protesters, says **Phil Turner**

“I NEVER thought this day would arrive.” Those are the words of Haseeb Alam, one of the last two defendants in the Rotherham 12 case.

Haseeb and Mahroof Sultan walked free last week after an ordeal lasting well over two years. Charges of violent disorder were thrown out after the prosecution offered no evidence at Sheffield Crown Court.

Haseeb told Socialist Worker, “I was only 18 when I was charged. It’s been hanging over me for about two and a half years. Now I just feel relieved it’s all over.”

Twelve Asian men were arrested in early morning raids five weeks after a magnificent 400-strong anti-fascist protest in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, in September 2015. They were charged with violent disorder.

The Unite Against Fascism (UAF) demonstration opposed a march by the Nazi group Britain First. It came two weeks after 81 year old Mushin Ahmed was killed in the town in a racist murder. And it was the 14th Nazi demonstration in as many months.

Haseeb and Mahroof initially pleaded guilty. But they were allowed to change to not guilty pleas after a unanimous acquittal of ten of the Rotherham 12 by a jury in November 2016.

Unfit

The case against the two was thrown out after the court heard that Chief Inspector Richard Butterworth was unfit to give evidence.

“It’s been a terrible ordeal,” Mahroof said. “It’s been two to three years, a long, long journey and a lot of pressure. And it was all because of the police.”

Butterworth was in command of policing on the day of the UAF demonstration and a key witness in the first trial. Defence lawyers heavily criticised him for police failings.

In the original trial prosecutors acknowledged that Nazi groups were intent on causing division, fear, intimidation and terror

BACK STORY

Twelve Asian men were arrested in Rotherham in October 2015

- They were charged with violent disorder after attending an anti-fascist protest in the town
- Fascist groups had tried to whip up racism there following a child sexual exploitation scandal
- Fascists attacked anti-fascists outside a pub following the protest—and four were jailed
- But the Rotherham 12 have walked free of all charges in a landmark victory for protesters

through perpetual acts of violence and murder. Four fascists were later jailed for violent disorder.

The court heard how police did nothing to stop a group of drunken fascists from attacking Asian men outside a pub on the day of the protest.

The William Fry public house was known to be a haunt of racists and Nazis.

Defence lawyers said police had led demonstrators “into an ambush” by forcing them to walk past it.

Defence barrister Michael Mansfield QC mocked Butterworth for claiming he did not know that the pub was a hotspot for racists and fascists.

He described Rotherham as a place where the “air was filled with fear”. Racists cynically used a child sexual exploitation scandal in the town to try and whip up hatred.

UAF and trade unionists adopted the slogan, “Justice for the victims—don’t let the racists divide us.”

Rotherham 12 campaigners ask why the defendants were arrested, never mind charged and dragged through the courts. The campaign has called for an independent inquiry into policing



More online

Self-defence is no offence—victory to Rotherham 12 bit.ly/2CwybGF



ANTI-FASCISTS PROTEST in Rotherham in September 2015

PICTURES: SOCIALIST WORKER

‘We refused to surrender to the racist charges—and we’ve been vindicated’

By **ABRAR JAVID**, Rotherham 12 defendant

AS ONE of the Rotherham 12 defendants, this is a proud moment for myself and for the rest of the defendants. We have been vindicated at Sheffield Crown Court.

Since our arrests in October 2015 it has been a difficult and challenging journey. We’ve shown resilience against the establishment.

South Yorkshire Police’s only aim was to further demonise Muslims in Rotherham in some perverted twist to make up for their historic failing to tackle child sexual exploitation.

Solidarity

Our comrades from Stand Up To Racism and Unite Against Fascism have stood strong in solidarity with us throughout our campaign and during far right marches.

Other campaigners, including those demanding justice over Orgreave and Hillsborough, have stood with us too, along with trade unions.

We have shown how grassroots mobilisation, campaigning and



Abrar Javid

activism can change the landscape for people who feel isolated, marginalised and targeted.

We refused to surrender to the pressures that we faced and were steadfast in tackling injustice to the end. Ten of us were acquitted of all charges in November 2016.

The fate of the last two remaining defendants, whose trial collapsed before it reached a jury, was a fitting end.

The cases should have been thrown out when the Crown Prosecution Service was considering whether to charge us from the offset.

But it is my belief that the arrests and prosecutions were

politically motivated and had no substance.

The Monitoring Group that led our campaign gave us the direction and leadership nationally which helped to build a strong campaign.

We were also able to get strong legal representation, including from solicitor Imran Khan and Birnberg, Peirce and Partners.

Political

It was key to have legal representation that understood the political perspective and context to our arrests.

The Rotherham 12 campaign team argued that self-defence is no offence.

The team and the legal representatives worked in tandem to build a strong case against the charges of violent disorder that we faced.

We still maintain our position that these charges were politically motivated, institutionally racist and an exercise in collective punishment of Muslims in Rotherham.

The Rotherham 12 campaign will continue to seek answers for why 12 men who stood up to attacks from fascists were put on trial.



Backlash at school shooting feeds into rage against Trump

National school walkouts have been organised by students in the wake of the horrific massacre in Parkland, Florida, reports **Alistair Farrow**

STUDENTS IN the US are organising after a school shooting last week saw 17 people killed at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

The Women's March Youth Empower organisation has called for a national school walkout on 14 March for 17 minutes.

Another national walkout has been called for 20 April, the 19th anniversary of the Columbine massacre.

And a march on Washington DC has been called on 24 March.

There will also be a Women's Strike to mark International Working Women's Day on 8 March.

Jaclyn Corin, a student at the school, said, "One hundred of my classmates and I will be traveling to Tallahassee this Tuesday and Wednesday to speak with our State Senators and House of Representative members".

Another student, Emma Gonzalez, said, "To every politician who is taking donations from the National Rifle Association—shame on you."

Control

The Democrats who support the protests go no further than calling for gun control laws.

But the real issue is the militarism, violence and glorification of armed power that mark the Trump administration—and those before it.

This new wave of protests can feed into a mood of disgust at racist US president Donald Trump and his assault on migrants.

More than 300 students at Stephen F Austin high school in Houston walked out last Wednesday

BACK STORY

US president Donald Trump faces anger after the shooting on Wednesday of last week

- The powerful pro-gun National Rifle Association supported Trump's presidential election campaign

- Trump was criticised for not talking about gun controls after the shooting

- He caused outrage after suggesting the FBI didn't stop the shooter because it spent "too much time" investigating him

in protest at the deportation of their classmate, Dennis Rivera.

The 19 year old student was detained after being involved in a fight at school.

It emerged he was undocumented and immigration officials demanded he be detained without bail.

The news came as human rights spokespeople for the United Nations raised concerns that US immigration officials are using deportation proceedings to target activists.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights pointed to the case of Maru Mora-Villalpando as evidence of this, along with other examples.

Mora-Villalpando is a leader of Northwest Detention Center Resistance, set up after prisoners at a private immigration detention centre went on hunger strike in 2014.

She has since been targeted with deportation proceedings.

The killer praised fascists

THE KILLER Nikolas Cruz was a member of the "white supremacist" group the Republic of Florida (ROF), according to the Anti Defamation League.

ROF leader Jordan Jereb claimed Cruz had trained with the organisation.

He subsequently said his identification of Cruz had been a "misunderstanding".

The claim was taken up by multiple news sites.

Now that it has been shown

to be false, some media sources are keen to insist he wasn't a fascist.

But Cruz praised Nazis on social media.

And he drew a "Nazi symbol" on his bag.

According to the CNN news network, which accessed a private group chat, he "talked about killing Mexicans, keeping black people in chains and cutting their neck".

Posts on his other accounts attack Muslims.

PROTESTERS IN Florida call for action against gun violence

ETHIOPIA

Western-backed regime cracks down after protests topple prime minister

ETHIOPIAN PRIME minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned last week following nearly three years of protests.

A rising wave of strikes and demonstrations hit areas around the capital Addis Ababa in the run-up to Hailemariam's fall.

But any thought that the regime was letting up its repression was banished the next day as it imposed a six-month state of emergency. Displaying signs "which could stir up violence" is also prohibited.

In August last year, the government lifted a ten-month state of emergency that had seen 29,000 people detained.

It had been imposed after hundreds of people were killed in anti-government protests demanding political freedoms.

The country's Oromo and Amhara people—who make up about 61 percent of the population of 105 million—have staged mass demonstrations since 2015.

They demand greater political inclusion and an end to human rights abuses.

Economic issues have also been at the centre of the revolt. The regime has launched land grabs that displace small peasant producers while benefiting the small clique at the head of the government.

Workers face low wages and strict labour discipline enforced to attract foreign investors in industries such as footwear.

Thousands of graduates have no jobs and little prospect of finding one. Western powers praise Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia and

its pro-market economic policies.

US secretary of state Rex Tillerson said last year, "A warm friendship connects the Ethiopian and American people."

But the US and European Union are unnerved by the failure to defeat protests and the regime's inability to stop refugees coming to Europe.

The new state of emergency is unlikely to end the resistance.

Mulatu Gemechu, a senior member of opposition party the Oromo Federalist Congress, has demanded "real change".

"We need free elections, adherence to the constitution and a judiciary that is not a tool of the regime," he said. "But this regime cannot introduce real change if it wants to survive because it would lose power."

Supporting the strikes

STUDENTS THAT support university workers fighting for pensions need to be clear about how we can help their fight.

Some have argued that we should claim our tuition fees back for lost lessons on strike days.

Students may genuinely believe that this can help academic staff by putting pressure on university management.

But this runs the risk of suggesting we're against the strike.

If students really want to do something about this, they should join the picket lines.

This not only offers solidarity but also sends a strong message to the university and neoliberal bosses.

Education is already treated as a commodity thanks to the introduction of tuition fees.

Universities treat the provision of education as a profit-making enterprise.

Using the bourgeois concept of contractual damages to claim property back would not just directly affect the strikers.

It would also affect students in the long run.

It suggests that lecturers are responsible for providing the commodity to students.

The University of Bristol has already said that it has no plans to reimburse our fees as they go towards more than just contact hours.

With this in the backdrop, it is all the more important to join the picket lines and offer solidarity. We can do better than signing up to the idea of education as a commodity.

Prarthana Krishnan
Bristol

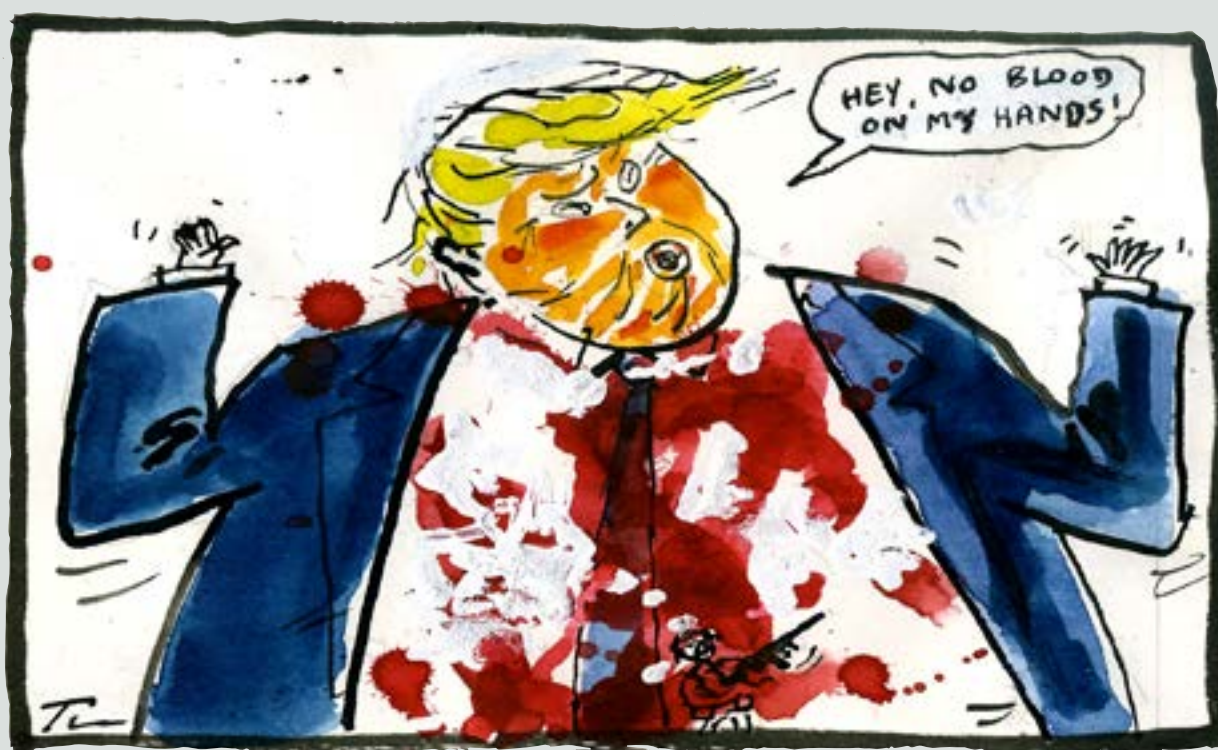


ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Behind the headlines—brutal police repression for refugees

THERE'S A lot of desperation here in Calais.

Police repression is fairly consistent. We've been working here for almost two and a half years now and it hasn't changed much.

Visits like the Stand Up To Racism one last week can help. It's always good when people come to show solidarity. It's very important. I met lots of very compassionate and passionate people.

In the last few weeks the police attacks haven't been so bad. Sometimes it can be awful—broken limbs and people with all sorts of wounds. I've been shot in the back with a rubber bullet before.

Recently the temperature has

dropped and that has meant people, police included, don't want to be out and about.

Police violence varies from week to week.

They are brought in from different regions to Calais because the town has a disproportionate number of riot police needed relative to its size.

So they bring in different police forces. Their attitude can depend on the region or on the mood at the time. Dunkirk has a pro-refugee mayor, but it still has a police force full of bigots.

Violence is a fairly constant feature.

When something happens there's always a week or a couple

of weeks when everyone is reeling from it. When there are deaths—such as earlier this year and at the end of last year—it leaves everyone a little bit confused and a bit quieter.

People here are so far from what's going on politically in Britain it's difficult to focus on things like Theresa May's new pledge to add £45 million to border security.

Maybe once upon a time it might have shocked some people, or more people. But having seen how people have been policed here I think people see the news as one more part of a failing situation.

Charlie Whitbread
Calais

Justice for Ahd Tamimi Silent Walks for Grenfell are spreading

AHD TAMIMI became famous after a video of her slapping an Israeli soldier went viral in December 2017.

Now she is standing trial in a secretive military court.

The last thing Israel want is further attention towards her.

The Israeli state is constantly trying to present a sanitised version of itself.

It is now set to host one of the biggest cycling tours in the world in May—the Giro D'Italia.

This is just one of a

series of high profile events it is hosting.

These include the FIL Men's Lacrosse World Championship in July. And Tel Aviv hosts the African Film Festival in January 2019.

Israel is attempting to pose as a place of freedom and inclusivity.

Ahd Tamimi has become an icon that Israel wants the world to forget about as she faces trial.

We must make sure it doesn't succeed.

Nadia Sayed
East London

THE MONTHLY Silent Walks in memory of the people who died in the Grenfell Tower fire are spreading.

A protest in Manchester took place this month and one will happen in Bristol next month. The organisers in Bristol plan to do it monthly after seeing how the first month goes.

Now it's about spreading it to different cities across the country.

It's about people putting pressure on whoever is in that position of power.



Whether it's the Conservatives in power or if it moves on to a Labour government, they need to understand that as a people we are united and we are together. If Jeremy Corbyn

comes into play I hope he does what he's promised. This movement is showing that we are powerful together and we have a say over our lives.

Zeyad Cred
Silent Walk organiser

Just a thought...

Westminster's sick joke on us

TORY Westminster Council's plans to ask richer residents to give voluntary donations to help the homeless in the borough would be laughable if they were not so hypocritical.

A Shelter report published last year claims that over 300,000 people in Britain are homeless or living in temporary accommodation.

The idea that this disaster can be solved by appealing to the charitable instincts of the rich residents of Westminster is a sick joke. If the homelessness problem is to be solved we can start by kicking the Tories out.

Rob Murthwaite
North London

Haringey win gives us hope

SEEING campaigners in Haringey get rid of a hated right wing Labour council leader is a sight for sore eyes (Socialist Worker, 14 February).

Now the race is on to kick out all the Blairite councillors along with all those who want to sell off council housing.

The campaign against the redevelopment gives a boost in the fight for decent housing for all.

Janice Ellsworth
Mansfield

●WHY DO Labour councillors continue to implement Tory cuts?

One reason is expenses. In Haringey, council leader Claire Kober raked in £44,293 in expenses for 2016-17.

If elected, left wing candidates should promise to take only what are genuine expenses and give the rest to local campaign groups. Then they will be much closer to the working class they are meant to represent.

Andy Pettit
Coventry

Stop Labour's council cuts

THE TORIES plan to cut £300 million central government subsidy to Bradford in 2020.

The council will have to find that money from council tax and business rates. This will mean more devastating cuts to services. Well done Tory voters, the cuts are coming to you soon!

Pam Thompson
On Facebook

STRIKE BACK AT FAT CAT COLLEGE BOSSES

University bosses' assault on pensions is hitting low paid workers who endure precarious, part time contracts. It's the latest attack aimed at turning education into a profitable business. UCU union members told **Sadie Robinson** that their coming strike is a fight to defend education

WAR HAS broken out on campuses. The biggest strike in Britain since the junior doctors' walkouts in 2016 is set to hit universities this week.

Around 40,000 UCU union members are fighting an attack on their USS pension scheme that will snatch tens of thousands of pounds from workers in retirement.

They have voted overwhelmingly for strikes to stop the assault—and their union called 14 days of escalating walkouts. The first is a two-day strike starting on Thursday. "But the anger isn't just about pensions.

Kristina Hedges is UCU branch secretary at Cardiff University. "The pensions attack is bloody appalling," she told Socialist Worker. "But it's the thin end of the wedge. People are angry about everything.

"Workload is a massive issue. Casualisation is a big issue. There are lots of people on shit contracts and low wages. People have basically had enough."

Abdullah Yusuf, a politics lecturer and UCU assistant secretary at Dundee university, said the attacks are part of a broader assault.



Abdullah Yusuf, Dundee



Kristina Hedges, Cardiff



Bruce Baker, Newcastle

"It's capitalism basically—trying to make everything about the individual," he told Socialist Worker. "The message is, you have to look after yourself because no one else cares. There's no collective responsibility.

"The pension attack is part of the package of marketisation."

This anger has led to a strong mood to fight—and high levels of recruitment to the union.

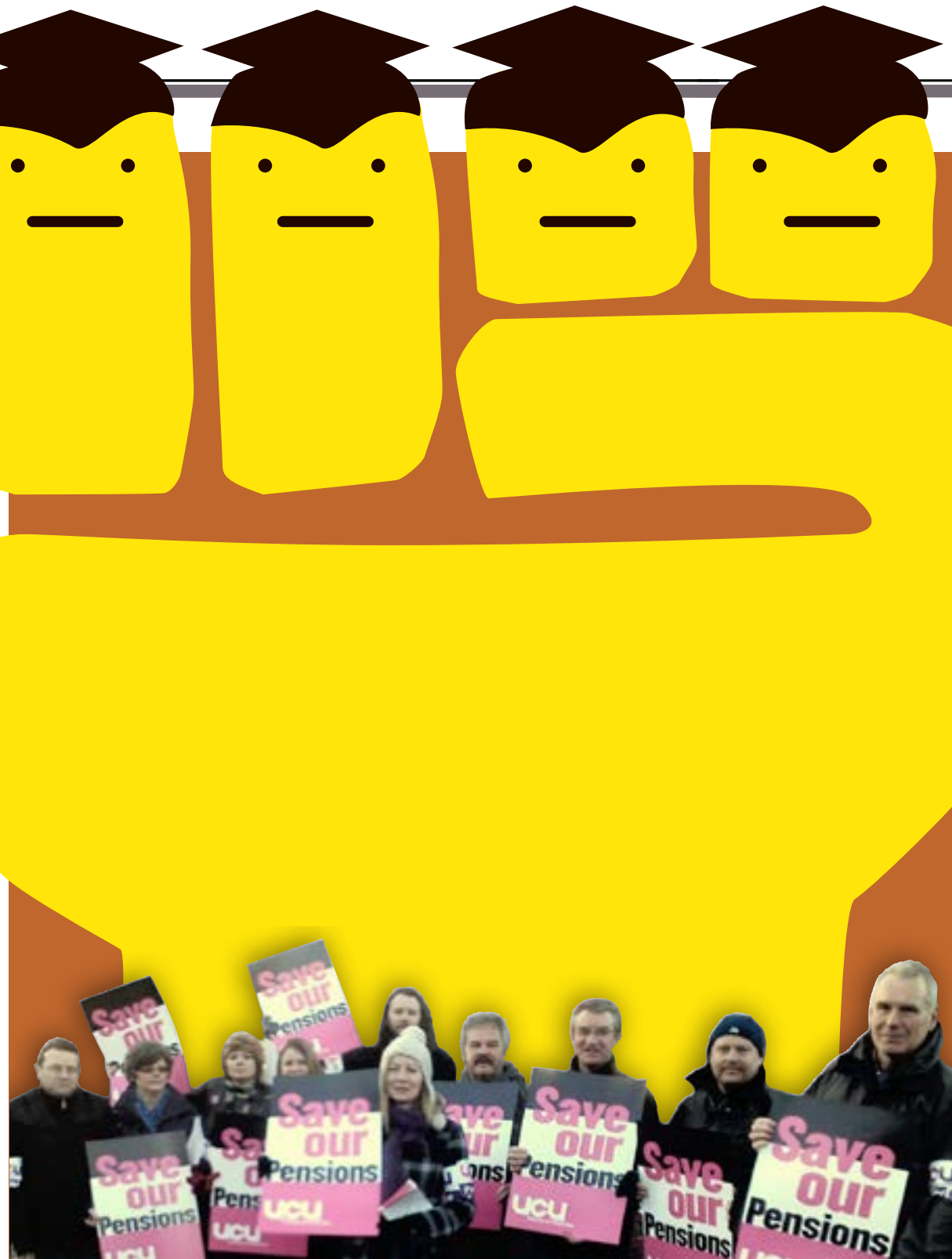
Abdullah said, "Everyone is keen to do something about this. There's a lot of grassroots activism. Students are organising events on the strike days and we're working together."

Julie Hearn is branch chair of the UCU at Lancaster university. "Lots of people are joining, particularly casualised staff," she told Socialist Worker.

"The mood is fantastic and resolute. And students support us. An informal survey of students showed that, out of 460 students, 400 are in favour of the strikes."

Bruce Baker, UCU president at Newcastle university, added, "We've gained a lot of members since the dispute started. This is a really big attack and it's fired up a lot of people."

He said that students have been "more solid than I expected". "A



BACK STORY

What's behind this strike?

UNIVERSITIES UK (UUK) represents university bosses. It wants the USS pension scheme to become a defined contribution one.

The move will slash tens of thousands from workers' pensions.

Some 40,000 UCU union members will be involved in strikes against the attack.

Go to bit.ly/2EXdJ4N for details of who's on strike and when.

group of students got in touch two weeks ago and they had already organised a group to support the strike," he said.

Full time student officials at Cardiff students' union released a statement opposing the strike. But Kristina said this provoked a "backlash".

"Students have set up a petition supporting the strikes," she said. "Labour students have said they will be at the picket line. And there's a student strike committee."

Bosses want to switch workers' defined benefit scheme to a defined contribution one (see box). It will leave pensions at the mercy of the stock market and give no guaranteed income in retirement.

For many, it's estimated that the shift would slash their pensions by half or more. "It's such a disgraceful deal that you can't not take action," said Kristina. "And you need to take action that will have an effect—more than just a one-day strike."

It's not the first attack. In 2012 the scheme shifted from a final salary to a career average one. This followed a series of strikes by UCU members, but union leaders failed to lead a fight that could win.

Julie said, "It's salami tactics. Every

few years they come and nibble at our pension scheme, but this time it's a big bite."

The bosses will try and paint lecturers as a privileged, well-off bunch who don't deserve any support. It's a bit rich coming from them—vice chancellors (VCs) have seen their salaries rise by over 50 percent in a ten-year period (see box, above right).

"She's on housing benefit—and every July she gets a bigger pay packet that pushes her over the edge for being eligible."

The low pay for some means there is some "concern about losing money" during the strikes. "But nobody's saying we're doing too many strike days," said Kristina.

Strikers fear what will happen to conditions in education and elsewhere if the pension attack goes through.

Bruce said that the attacks would transform universities for the worse. "Without good pensions, fewer people will see higher education as a viable career," he said.

"The whole sector will turn into something like Deliveroo or Uber. It will finalise the transition of universities, which operate as charities, into large corporations that don't pay tax."

Abdullah warned, "There will be a domino effect. If we lose, management can go for other things.

"But we are powerful. If we win,



Dame Glynis Breakwell Bath £451,000



Peter Mathieson Edinburgh £342,000



Donald Nutbeam Southampton 'Golden goodbye' £252,000

Who's really 'privileged'?

BOSSES WILL try to undermine support for the UCU strikes by painting strikers as rich, pampered and privileged. But the vice chancellors (VCs) are the real fat cats.

In 2005-06 their average salary was £165,105, not including pensions. By 2015-16 it had shot up by 56 percent to £257,904.

Perhaps that's no surprise, since the vast majority have a hand in setting their own salaries. A UCU Freedom of Information request found that 95 percent of VCs are either members of their remuneration committee or can attend meetings.

Earlier this month the new VC at Edinburgh University grabbed a "golden hello" welcome package worth £410,000.

Peter Mathieson took a 33 percent salary rise as part of the package. His basic salary will be £342,000—£85,000 more than his predecessor.

If that isn't enough to get by on, Mathieson also gets £42,000 in lieu of pension contributions and "relocation costs" of £26,000. Oh, and a five-bedroom grace-and-favour house.

Dame Glynis Breakwell at Bath university was Britain's highest

paid VC in 2015-16, grabbing £451,000 a year in salary and benefits. On top of her massive salary, Breakwell had claimed £2 for biscuits. The claim was part of a £20,000 annual expense bill.

The university paid her council tax and utility bills.

The university court, which scrutinises VC pay, last month voted for her to go after protests over her pay. But it seems leaving your job doesn't have to get in the way of raking in money.

Retirement

Breakwell is due to take a "sabbatical" on full pay before formally retiring in February next year. Until then she can stay living in a listed Georgian townhouse provided by the university. And she'll keep her retirement package.

New figures from the UCU showed that the University of Southampton spent nearly £700,000 in the last academic year on VC pay. That included a "golden goodbye" of £252,000 to outgoing VC Donald Nutbeam.

The university had advertised for a chauffeur for current VC Sir Christopher Snowden—while slashing jobs.

Pensions crisis manufactured

THE EXCUSES used to rob workers of their pensions are completely phony. The crisis in USS isn't real—it's manufactured. And political decisions made by the Tories lie behind it.

The USS pension scheme is a collective defined benefit scheme with some 350 member organisations. Many workers in older "pre-92" universities are part of the scheme. As Bruce explained, "All institutions share the liability. But some, such as Oxford and Cambridge, want out.

"They want to get rid of the pension liabilities so it's easier to borrow money."

Since the government raised the cap on tuition fees, universities are competing for students—and the money that comes with them. This means many are looking to expand and buy more buildings, land and student accommodation.

But the USS scheme poses a problem.

Carlo Morelli from the UCU's national executive committee explained, "As charitable bodies universities face constraints on how to raise funds. Some have started issuing bonds to raise capital.

"But pension liabilities limit how much they can borrow."

Bosses want to get rid of the liabilities by shifting to a defined contribution scheme. This would put any risk with workers, not bosses, and break the collectivity of the scheme.

To get away with this, bosses have claimed the scheme is unaffordable. They have used valuations based on scenarios that won't happen.

University College London UCU vice president Sean Wallis explained



Universities are not going bankrupt

how this works. "They have used a model of what would happen if the employers ceased to operate—if all institutions went bankrupt simultaneously," he said. "This is an extraordinary assumption, one that in political terms can be said to have zero probability."

No pre-92 university has gone bankrupt since USS was established. And if the scheme continues as it is, it will remain in surplus.

Carlo said, "The government created this crisis through the marketisation of higher education. We need a return to a publicly accountable, coordinated and sustainable higher education system."

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } PUBLIC MEETINGS

BRISTOL

Politics of the Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress. Booklaunch with Iain Ferguson
Wed 28 Feb, 7.30pm, YHA, 14 Narrow Quay, BS1 4QA

LIVERPOOL

Politics of the Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress
Wed 7 Mar, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, 22 School Ln, L1 3BT
Booklaunch with Iain Ferguson

MANCHESTER

Politics of the Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress
Wed 21 Mar, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St, M2 5NS
Booklaunch with Iain Ferguson

NORWICH

Going beyond the binary—Marxism, gender and trans liberation
Thu 8 Mar, 7.30pm, Vauxhall Centre, Johnson Place, NR2 2SA

PORTSMOUTH

Marxism and mental distress
Wed 21 Mar, 7.30pm, Somerstown Community Centre, River's St, PO5 4EZ

SWANSEA

Politics of the Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress
Thu 1 Mar, 7.30pm, Brynmill Community Centre, St Albans Rd, SA20BP
Booklaunch with Iain Ferguson

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } SOCIAL MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

ABERDEEN

1918—how did women win the vote?

Wed 28 Feb, 6pm, Belmont Cinema Cafe, 49 Belmont St, AB10 1JS

BARNSELEY

Why Winston Churchill is no hero

Thu 1 Mar, 7pm, YMCA, Blucher St, S70 1AP

BIRMINGHAM: CITY CENTRE

The rise of the far right in Europe—how can we fight it?

Wed 7 Mar, 7pm, Birmingham LGBT Centre, 38/40 Holloway Circus, B1 1EQ

BOLTON

Going beyond the binary—Marxism, gender and trans politics

Wed 28 Feb, 7pm, Bolton Socialist Club, 16 Wood St (off Bradshawgate), BL1 1DY

After the Oxfam scandal...
Are NGOs our enemies or allies?

Devastation in Haiti was compounded by Western imperialism

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Are robots after your job?

Wed 28 Feb, 7.30pm, Red Triangle Cafe, 160 St James's St, BB11 1NR

CARDIFF

How did women win the vote?

Wed 28 Feb, 7.30pm, Cathays Community Centre, Cathays Terrace, CF24 4HX

CHESTERFIELD

Marx, money and bitcoin

Thu 1 Mar, 7.30pm, Chesterfield Library, New Beetwell St, Chesterfield, S40 1QN

COLCHESTER

Abortion Wars—the Fight for Reproductive Rights

Thu 29 Mar, 7.30pm, Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre, Colchester, CO1 2FG
Booklaunch with Judith Orr

COVENTRY

The Russian Revolution and the British working class

Wed 7 Mar, 7.30pm, The Golden Cross, 8 Hay Ln, CV1 5RF

DERBY

1918—how did women win the vote?

Thu 1 Mar, 7pm, West End Community Centre, Mackworth Rd (next to Britannia Mill), Derby, DE22 3BL

DONCASTER

Marxism and mental distress

Wed 28 Feb, 7.30pm, The Womens Centre (Changing Lives), 5 Princes St, DN1 3NJ

DUNDEE

Class, revolution and anti-racism

Wed 28 Feb, 7.30pm, Dundee Voluntary Action, 10 Constitution Rd, DD1 1LL

EXETER

Going beyond the binary—Marxism, gender and trans liberation

Sat 3 Mar, 2pm, Exeter Community Centre, 17 St. Davids Hill, EX4 3RG

GLASGOW

How can Palestine be free?

Thu 1 Mar, 7pm, Avant Garde, 33-44 King St, Merchant City, G1 5QT

HUDDERSFIELD

Capitalism and technology — is a robot after your job?

Wed 28 Feb, 6.30pm, Brian Jackson House, 2 New North Parade (near both train and bus stations), HD1 5JP

HULL

Catalonia, independence and resistance

Thu 22 Mar, 7pm, Cafe licious, 104 Cottingham Rd, HU6 7RZ

SOCIALIST WORKER PUBLIC MEETINGS

CAMBRIDGE

Thu 1 Mar, 7.30pm, River Lane Centre, River Lane, CB5 8HP

DUDLEY

Wed 28 Feb, 8pm, The What Centre, 23 Coventry St, Stourbridge, DY8 1EP

LONDON: BRENT AND HARROW

Thu 1 Mar, 7.30pm, The Pepperpot Centre, 1a Thorpe Close, Ladbroke Grove, W10 5XL

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Wed 28 Feb, 7pm, The Old Fire Station, 84 Mayton St, N7 6QT

ROTHERHAM

Wed 28 Feb, 7pm, Talbot Lane Methodist Church Centre, Moorgate St, S60 2EY

SHEFFIELD: CITY CENTRE

Thu 1 Mar, 7pm, Central United Reformed Church, 60 Norfolk St, S1 2JB

LONDON: NEWHAM

Ten years since the crash—has capitalism recovered?

Wed 28 Feb, 7pm, Stratford Advice Arcade, 107-109 The Grove (next to Morrisons car park), E15 1HP

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

The roots of racism and how we fight it

Wed 28 Feb, 7pm, Oxford House, Derbyshire St (opposite Bethnal Green Rd Tesco), E2 6HG

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Who was the real Lenin?

Wed 28 Feb, 7.30pm, William Morris Community Centre, 6-8 Greenleaf Rd, Walthamstow, E17 6QQ

MANCHESTER: CENTRAL

The real tradition of International Women's Day

Wed 7 Mar, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St, M2 5NS

PORTSMOUTH

How did women win the vote?

Wed 28 Feb, 7.30pm, Somerstown Community Centre, River's St, PO5 4EZ

SOUTHAMPTON

Going beyond the binary—Marxism, gender and trans liberation

Wed 28 Feb, 7.30pm, Central Baptist Church Hall, Devonshire Rd, SO15 2GY

TELFORD

How did women win the vote?

Wed 14 Mar, 7.30pm, Carriages, The Parade, Wellington, TF1 1PY

WOLVERHAMPTON AND WALSALL

Marx, money and bitcoin

Wed 28 Feb, 7.30pm, Wild Bytes Cafe, Darlington St, Wolverhampton, WV1 4HW

YORK

Marx, money and bitcoin

Wed 7 Mar, 7.30pm, Sea Horse Hotel, 4 Fawcett St, York, YO10 4AH

{ MOVEMENT EVENTS }

DORSET

HDV—gentrification and corrupt councils

Sat 3 Mar, 1.30pm, Colliton Club, Colliton Park, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

NATIONAL

March Against Racism on UN Anti-Racism Day

Sat 17 Mar, London 12 noon, Portland Place, W1A 1AA.
Glasgow 11.30am Holland Street, G2
Cardiff 12.30pm, Grange Gardens CF11 7LJ.
Go to standuptoracism.org.uk

NATIONAL Students Against Racism conference

Sat 3 Mar, 11.30am-5pm, National Union of Teachers, Mabledon Place, Kings Cross, WC1H 9BD. Speakers include Lowkey, Janet Alder and Colette Levy. Co-hosted by Stand Up To Racism and Mend. Go to bit.ly/2o31GwK

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Black Panther raises tough arguments about liberation

Marvel's latest superhero film stands out for its proud portrayal of African people—but it draws some uncomfortable conclusions, writes **Ken Olende**

BLACK PANTHER is a superior superhero film—with a spectacular punch up in a casino, an explosive car chase and a battle involving armoured rhinos.

It is better plotted, scripted, directed and acted than most. But what makes it unique is the black cast, black writer and black director—though it does feature a couple of token whites.

To the outside world the tiny central African state of Wakanda is among the world's poorest countries.

It's known as the only source of the metal vibranium, needed for hi-tech machines.

But it is in fact unimaginably rich, built on a vast mountain of vibranium. The country's rulers long ago decided to hide this fact to avoid invasion by "the colonisers" of the West.

Yet this isolationist policy means taking no part in Africa's struggles or the wider fight against racism. One character asks if Wakanda cares about the "two billion people who look like us".

T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman) is the king, which means also being the superhuman Black Panther.

He has split with his partner Nakia (Lupita Nyong'o) because she rejects isolationism.

As the film opens she is using Wakandan technology to covertly infiltrate Boko Haram in Nigeria to thwart their kidnap of more schoolgirls.

Erik Killmonger (Michael B Jordan), from Oakland, California, challenges T'Challa's rule in Wakanda.

It is no coincidence that the revolutionary Black Panther Party in the 1960s was set up in Oakland. Killmonger says the Black Panther's duty is to use Wakanda's arms to liberate black people the world over.

Glorious

The film's design is a glorious evocation of the Afro-futurism of musicians from Sun Ra to Parliament.

Wakanda's capital recalls the hopeful modernism at the centre of African capitals such as Nairobi or Cote D'Ivoire built in the years immediately following independence.

This fits with how the Black Panther first appeared in Marvel comics in 1966 as a positive portrayal of a black character.

He appeared coincidentally three months before the revolutionary Black Panther Party launched. Marvel then briefly tried to change his name to the Black Leopard, but it didn't stick.

The film is a revelation with its black is beautiful look and celebration of Africa—where Africans are



CHADWICK BOSEMAN as T'Challa—the superhuman Black Panther



Lupita Nyong'o as Nakia

key players.

It may seem harsh to demand more, but there are problems with the politics.

Killmonger gets many of the best lines, including, "Bury me in the ocean. My ancestors knew death was better than bondage".

But he is both militant and villain, reflecting "the hate that hate produced". The CIA represented by Martin Freeman are good guys and much more trustworthy.

Through the film it becomes increasingly clear that Wakanda can no longer exist in sublime isolation.

But the solutions suggested in the film do not have real world parallels.

Kendrick Lamar curates a powerful soundtrack

KENDRICK LAMAR is one of the greatest rappers of this generation, and knows how to strike the right political tone.

So he was the ideal candidate to curate Black Panther's soundtrack album.

It's a celebration of the vibrant cultural epicentre of South Africa. It features upcoming artists such as Babes Wodumo, a product of the South African genre of dance music 'gqom'. There's also singer Sjava from Johannesburg and rappers Saudi and Yugen Blakrok.

The artists incorporate South Africa's diverse languages, mixing the Zulu language with English in their lyrics.

The album explores black identity, opening up discussion about how blackness is

defined—a heavily debated subject.

Paramedic! by rap artists SOB x RBE confronts black masculinity and image, emphasising how it's often shaped by poverty and racism.

The album's strength comes from a select few tracks that deal with issues that face black people daily.

The tracks Opps and Seasons touch on the institutional racism in the US prison system.

I Am by singer Jorja Smith deals with the relationship between black identity and "colour blind" anti-racism.

Black Panther encourages us to look back at the past as a way to focus on a future where opportunities aren't determined by your postcode or the colour of your skin.

Lois Browne



Babes Wodumo

THEATRE

WONDERLAND

by Beth Steel
Nottingham Playhouse until
24 February
Tickets from £8.50

THIS IS a play—with song and dance—about the Miners' Strike of 1984-85, written by the daughter of a Nottinghamshire miner at Welbeck Colliery.

It begins with the experiences of apprentices starting in 1983.

But we are soon introduced to the ruling class efforts to smash the most powerful section of the British labour movement.

A debate between new Coal Board boss Ian MacGregor and Tory energy minister Peter Walker starts about how to achieve this.

On our side we witness the debates about whether there should have been a ballot and the role of women—though there are no women in the cast.

Disaster

The final scenes deal with the return to work after the strike, the divisions that remain and the need to work together when disaster strikes at the face.

At first I was not sure whether a ribald musical take on the strike was going to work—but it does. The final curtain brought a standing ovation from a majority of the audience.

This is the first regional performance since its London premiere in 2014—and very pertinent to have in Nottinghamshire. Go and see it if it comes to a town near you.

Richard Buckwell

What's on at... BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop

Booklaunch—Politics of the Mind: Marxism and Mental Distress
with author Iain Ferguson

6:30pm
Monday
5 March

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MARXISM AND
MENTAL DISTRESS**

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bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

What has been the reaction to President Zuma's resignation?

There's a sense of great relief, a feeling of a heavy fog lifting.

That's shared by nearly everyone across the country.

It's so welcome that people have seen through this disreputable man.

He has led a regime of opportunism and corruption and mangled democracy.

This is the removal of a mafia ganglord at the head of crony capitalism.

He has been on borrowed time since his chosen candidate lost out narrowly to Cyril Ramaphosa in the African National Congress (ANC) leadership election three months ago.

A whole section of old guard Zuma supporters started to melt away.

The announcement that the ANC had voted no confidence in Zuma was made by Ace Magashule, a long term Zuma crony.

The ANC feared that the longer he went on, the worse it would do in the general election next year.

And business thought he was too unstable, too out of control.

That's why the stock market and the Rand currency have gone up a bit since Zuma was forced out.

Why was Zuma so hated?

Zuma hollowed out state institutions and subverted accountability. He took the basic criminality of capitalism to a new level.

In South Africa today the traditional economic power centres—mining, big agriculture, major industries—remain in essentially the same hands as they did under apartheid.

So Zuma and his acolytes, who weren't going to challenge that economic structure fundamentally, feasted on the state-owned enterprises.

Together with the Guptas, rich businessmen who were given influence over state appointments and contracts, they looted the state.

They found a way to become part of the people at the top without displacing the forces that were there already. Zuma sold his soul to the Guptas for money—and then more money.

Could this have been foreseen?

In 2005, as a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP) central committee, I alone implored the party not to support Zuma



PROTESTERS DEMAND Jacob Zuma's resignation as president

LIFE AFTER A DECADE OF ZUMA

South African socialist and former African National Congress minister **Ronnie Kasrils** spoke to Charlie Kimber about the significance of president Jacob Zuma's resignation last week



Ronnie Kasrils

becoming president. I had known Zuma since the 1960s in the liberation movement. I knew his opportunism, greed and lack of principle.

Later, before he became president, there was an infamous rape trial where he was cleared.

I told the SACP leadership in 2005, "Zuma has become the role model of those who say it's our turn to eat. They eat out of the pockets of big business while the masses starve.



The major industries are in the same hands as during apartheid

"We used to say we struggled and sacrificed for the people, and is that not what we are still about?"

But the left and the trade unions backed Zuma because of the experience of Thabo Mbeki, the president who followed Nelson Mandela.

The neoliberal economy started under Mandela, but Mbeki took it further.

There was hope on the left that Zuma would be better than Mbeki.

As the reality of his rule became better known, the opposition to Zuma grew.

In May 2017 he had to be removed from workers' rallies because he was going to be shouted down.

And opposition grew to him in parliament.

The Democratic Alliance, a capitalist party, made inroads because of his corruption. And a radical party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), attacked Zuma as well but from a much better perspective.

The EFF took up the issues put on the backburner from Mandela onwards.

They talked about the return of the land that had been stolen from black people, and a real assault on poverty, unemployment and inequality.

They got the better of the ANC. They will now continue to challenge Ramaphosa, who has stood by Zuma for four years as deputy president.

Is Zuma the only problem for South Africa's poor?

The horror Of Zuma's rule can't be understood simply as the actions of one man, however terrible.

He represents one feature of what has happened since the end of apartheid in 1994.

We have seen the creation of a black bourgeoisie, a miniscule number of people who've become capitalists and risen to great wealth.

The "Black Economic Empowerment" project saw them prosper while the great majority were left behind.

There was supposed to be a "trickle down" of wealth to the black majority, but it was no more than a few enriching themselves.

The structures of capital were left in place and deals done with big business locally and internationally.

The ANC retains mass support in the country, but it has been ebbing away, with disastrous local elections in 2016 that saw the ANC lose control of major cities.

There are big changes taking place in how people see the ANC and Zuma has accelerated that process.

Will Cyril Ramaphosa be any better as president?

Let's be clear who Cyril Ramaphosa is. He's a former miners' union leader who played a prominent role in the defeat of apartheid.

His path to power in the ANC was blocked at one point so he turned to harvesting huge amounts of money as a businessman. Now he's a multi-millionaire.

He was on the board of the mining firm Lonmin at the time of the Marikana massacre in 2012.

What does capital want from Zuma's fall?

The expectation is that, unlike his predecessor, Ramaphosa will not trample on the law. That's what many ordinary people hope.

It's also what sections of capital want. They want "normal" exploitation to go ahead without the crony capitalists who clustered around Zuma.

Ramaphosa hopes to regain the confidence of international capital. Mandela was adored by institutional institutions and businessmen.

The idea was that there would be huge inflows of capital, lifting everyone's living standards. It didn't happen, and it won't happen now.

But of course these are capitalist laws, laws that allowed those responsible for the slaughter at Marikana to go free.

There is likely to be a clear out at the top. Already some of the Guptas are being hunted. Some of Zuma's closest allies may be prosecuted or sacked.

But Ramaphosa is not going to challenge free market fundamentalism and neoliberalism.

Can Zuma's fall lead to any fundamental change?

The ANC's rule has seen the abandonment of the promises that were made in the Freedom Charter about a complete reordering of society.

The ANC blinked when faced with pressure from the powerful. It bent to the Washington consensus.

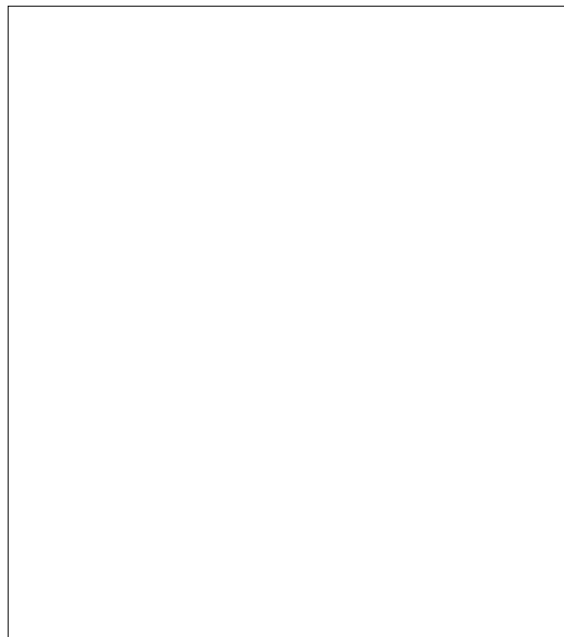
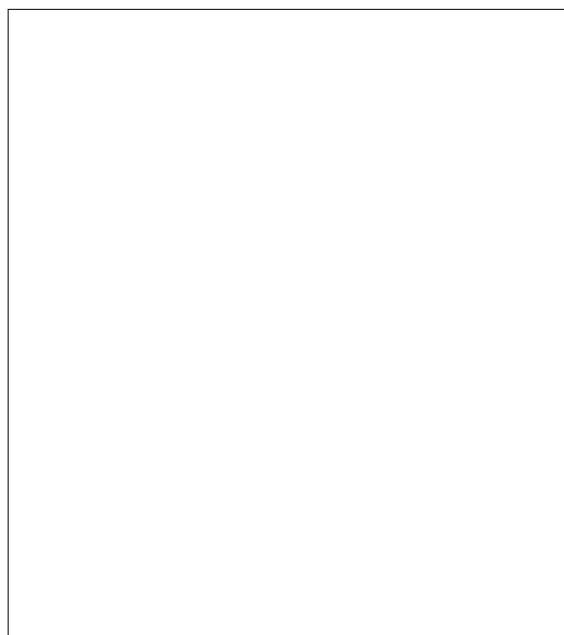
If the ANC had stuck to its principles then Zuma would never have emerged, there would not have been the space for him.

Now the question is whether there is going to be a serious attempt to deal with poverty, mass unemployment and inequality.

I still think fundamental change is possible.

If the ANC can't or won't do it then there has to be a new left that takes on these issues.

That's not easy. The workers' movement and the



JACOB Zuma with Atul Gupta, one of the powerful Gupta brothers (top) His successor Cyril Ramaphosa (above)

left are weak. But it has to grow from the struggles that take place.

At the end of my most recent book I say, "What is not difficult to suggest is that without that organised agency of change there can be no fundamental transformation.

"The working class is the driving force in this regard."

Ronnie Kasrils was as a founding member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC, and minister of intelligence services from 2004 to 2008.

He was a member of the national executive of the ANC from 1987 to 2007 as well as a member of the central committee of the South African Communist Party from 1986 to 2007.

READ MORE

● **A Simple Man—Kasrils and the Zuma Enigma** by Ronnie Kasrils Pub: Jacana Media £16.95

● **Armed and Dangerous—my undercover struggle against apartheid** by Ronnie Kasrils Pub: Jacana Media £14.95

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

PLUS ● **Nelson Mandela, 1918-2013** Socialist Worker's obituary bit.ly/2EySERI



COMMENT

There's more to the Irish language row than racism

A row over the Irish language has shone a light on the conflict that lies at the heart of Stormont, writes **Simon Basketter**

THE NORTHERN Irish Assembly collapsed more than a year ago under the pressure of a Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) financial scandal.

Last week Theresa May and Leo Varadkar, the Irish prime minister, went to Belfast hoping to announce a deal to reassemble the Assembly.

As befitted both politicians, their arrival speeded up the collapse of that deal.

One stumbling block was that the DUP was unwilling to sign up to an Irish Language Act. However they were also keen to point out their firm opposition to equal marriage.

Helpfully the Guardian newspaper pointed out that very few people speak Irish in Northern Ireland.

It added, "The darker truth is that Sinn Fein has chosen to weaponise the language question for political ends."

The Guardian deplores moves to revive a language as divisive, because the elimination of it has been so successful. The victims of oppression are dismissed as tribal.

It hasn't noticed that the institution most likely to impose a hard border in Ireland is the European Union.

There is more to this than just the parochial racism of British liberalism. The lack of people speaking Irish in Northern Ireland is the product of brutality over centuries.

That British-dropped up prejudice runs deep. The DUP MP Gregory Campbell once began an address to the Assembly saying, "Curry my yoghurt." He was mocking the Irish phrase used to say "Thank you"—"Go raibh maith agat."

Campbell is currently a MP. As is the DUP's Sammy Wilson, who refers to Irish as a "leprechaun language".

The Tories rely on these people to stay in office.

LEO VARADKAR and Theresa May in happier times

BACK STORY

● Theresa May tried to reassemble the Northern Ireland Assembly last week

● It collapsed over a year ago under pressure from the Renewable Heat scandal

● May and Irish taoiseach Leo Varadkar failed to reach a deal to end the impasse

● Crisis persists because Stormont has entrenched sectarian division

must be tolerated for the sake of holding together power-sharing.

And whenever the Unionists are caught with their hands in the till—as they often are—they play the sectarian card.

DUP communities minister Paul Givan slashed funding for the Irish language in December 2016. It was a rather blatant attempt to distract from the Renewable Heat Incentive scandal.

DUP leader and first minister Arlene Foster is embroiled in that scandal, where businesses could earn more money the more fuel they burned.

But there will at some point be a deal. The last deal, the 2015 "Fresh Start Agreement", did see parity of esteem on increasing privatisation and cutting both the public sector and tax on profits.

When Stormont was up and running the DUP used what's called a "Petition of Concern" more than 80 times to veto equal marriage and other reforms. So progress means looking elsewhere.

It means investment in the Irish Language and LGBT+ rights. It also means dropping the myth that there is no abortion in Northern Ireland because women have to travel to Britain to access it.

As People Before Profit's MLA Gerry Carroll said, "Fifty years ago a mass movement was put on the streets to demand basic rights. Now is the time to rediscover that spirit, and build a new civil rights movement."



The lack of people speaking Irish is the product of British brutality

The fight is on to save day care centre

by SARAH BATES

VULNERABLE PEOPLE and their families are fighting to save a vital adult day care centre from the brutal cuts of Birmingham council.

The Fairway day centre in the Kings Norton area of Birmingham faces closure after the Labour council said it didn't have the money to run it.

The cuts are another blow to social care and threaten to tear apart a community.

The council said it would need to invest £500,000 in building repairs, but campaigners say much less is needed to keep the service running.

Some of the 70 people who rely on the service have been using The Fairway for 40 years, and it is their primary source of social contact.

Determined

The council said last September that The Fairway would shut—but a determined campaign has forced it to reconsider.

The chair of the Save The Fairway campaign is Wendy



PROTESTING AGAINST the closure of the Fairway Centre

PICTURE: ALISTAIR WINGATE

Collymore. Her father lives with dementia and visits Fairway three days a week. She explained that the cuts are "cruel" and that The Fairway is "absolutely essential".

"He's been going there for four years and now he's settled in," she told Socialist Worker.

"If it shuts he could go to

the Harborne day centre, but the council are already planning to shut that in 2020."

Save The Fairway campaigners say that service users, staff and families were never told about the closure before a letter in September 2017.

They want a full, legal and transparent consultation

before any decision is made.

Wendy is her dad's primary carer, and says high quality care at The Fairway brings her peace of mind.

"Dad going there is such a relief," she said. "I know he is looked after in an environment where he's happy, safe and doesn't get agitated."

But campaigners say that

ten long term workers have moved to other centres since the news of the potential closure.

So the centre is now staffed by agency workers or people who are unfamiliar with the specific needs of service users.

Revitalised

Dave has been visiting The Fairway for three years and said it "revitalised" him after a stroke and a seizure which meant the loss of the remainder of his sight.

"It's given me so much more confidence," he told Socialist Worker. "When I started going I was at an all time low, and it was just brilliant to have people around me talking, and not have to face four walls at home."

Dave said The Fairway "gives me something to live for" and would be deeply missed if it closed.

People who use the service face an uncertain future.

Some may be moved to other day centres and others may have to take on carers in their own homes.

But Dave said that would not replace the sense of a

community that The Fairway gives him.

He said life without the centre would be "very lonely".

The uncertainty has already led to changes. Dave described how service users used to take trips out together to the gym, and to eat meals together.

But that now doesn't happen because the member of staff who organised it has moved on.

"A lot of people are suffering from mental health problems because of the uncertainty," he added.

Campaigners are frustrated at being treated this way by a Labour council. Dave has been a Labour Party member for 24 years, and said he had been "badly let down".

"I have a problem with people being targeted in this way," he said. "Disabled people should be at the top of the payment list not the cuts list."

Wendy echoed his frustration. "I've been voting since I was 18, and I've always encouraged people to vote," she said. "I'll be loath to vote Labour again."

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The history of foreign aid is steeped in imperialism

Right wingers are using revelations about Oxfam in Haiti for their own ends. **Tomáš Tengely-Evans** looks at what socialists should say about foreign aid

TORY POLITICIANS and the press want to use people's horror at sexual abuse by Oxfam workers in Haiti to undermine foreign aid.

The Daily Express newspaper is running a "crusade" against "foreign aid madness" headed up by the bigot Jacob Rees-Mogg.

But the British foreign aid budget of £12 billion is minuscule compared to the £40 billion that goes to the military. And this doesn't include the £120 billion going towards renewing Trident nuclear weapons.

It's little wonder that the biggest recipient of foreign aid in the world is Afghanistan, which has been destroyed by Western occupation.

Yet by far the biggest concentration of recipients is in Africa. The whole continent was underdeveloped by European imperialist powers in the 19th century—and still suffers from that legacy.

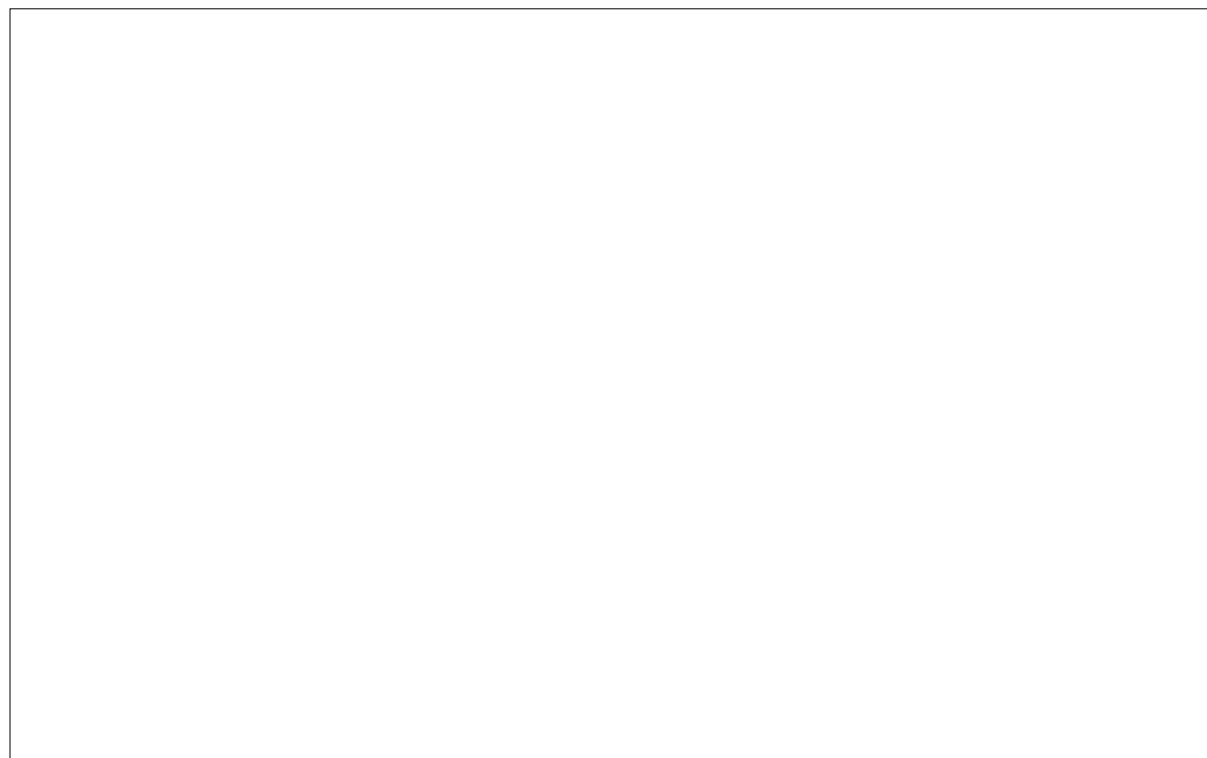
Suffering

Around 12 million Africans were shipped from West Africa to North America and the Caribbean between 1600 and 1850.

As well as causing immense suffering, this brutal process turned the clock back on African society. The population of West and Central Africa in 1850 was 25 million—around half of what it would have been without the slave trade.

After colonies won independence, the West kept them locked into a cycle of debt dependency.

The French made Haiti agree to pay 90 million gold francs over 122 years in compensation after a slave rebellion kicked out the colonisers in 1804. It's a key reason why the



MEMBERS OF the US army unloading supplies in Haiti in 2014

Caribbean island remains poverty-stricken and reliant on foreign aid.

Some right wingers resent giving money to those who suffer because of imperialism.

But others in the ruling class support foreign aid because it can help further their imperialist interests.

That's why former prime minister David Cameron committed the Tories to the UN's target of spending target of 0.7 percent of national income.

The West attaches strings to foreign aid such as privatising the schools or

hospitals that foreign aid funded, or helping Western military forces in warzones. And one of the most explicit forms of exploitation is "tied aid", which forces developing countries to buy products from donor countries.

We have to stand against the racist campaign of the Express, but our response can't just be to say increase foreign aid. It has to be transformed.

Western imperialism should be made to pay for its plunder of the Global South.

Banks and multinationals should

be stopped from taking profits out of Africa and all debt should be cancelled.

This requires the redistribution of wealth from rich to poor on a world scale. And it will take a fight by workers and the oppressed in the Global South and developed countries against imperialism.



On other pages...

South Africa after Zuma
>>Pages 14&15

Hypocritical Tory criticism

Sacked international development secretary Priti Patel is making headlines about how she wouldn't give Oxfam money.

But she was happy to hold secret meetings with top Israeli officials about giving the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) foreign aid money.

There's no outcry from right wingers if foreign aid goes to the West's allies rather than to people in need.

It's only a problem when aid is going to Palestinians suffering at the hands of IDF occupation forces.

The West relies on charities

THE WEST sees the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that give it out as an auxiliary force in conflicts.

At the height of the "war on terror" US defence secretary Colin Powell said that "NGOs are such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team".

Clauses in Afghan contracts say NGOs "should support military efforts in communities by helping to 'hold' areas after they are cleared" or "direct support of ongoing and planned counterinsurgency efforts".

Consultants in on the action

Consultancy Adam Smith International is an offshoot of think tank Adam Smith Institute which lobbies against "government interference" in the market.

That didn't stop it trousering £450 million in government aid funding since 2011.

Four top executives at Adam Smith International were forced to resign last April after the Department for International Development froze its funding.

It tried to get a leg up over rival consultants by using leaked government documents.

Private contracts are no bridge to decent education

THE COLLAPSE of outsourcing giant Carillion exposed the scam of private finance initiatives.

But that hasn't stopped the West exporting this disastrous model in the form of public private partnerships (PPP).

PPP projects see private firms build major infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals or roads in the Global South.

The West stumps up some money to support the projects, but the local governments are then

left with large bills to pay off in the future.

Over 150 international organisations published a global campaign manifesto highlighting the scandal last autumn.

The examples it uses show how Britain and other Western states have used foreign aid, often in former colonies, to push bosses' interests.

A World Bank-backed PPP hospital in Lesotho "costs three times more than the public hospital it replaced—\$67 million a year".

And it ended up "eating up more than half the public health budget" of the country.

One of the biggest winners of aid in Africa is Bridge International Academies (BIA).

Headquartered in London, BIA is backed by the British government, the World Bank, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Microsoft boss Bill Gates.

Western-backed private schools are becoming a huge market in Africa with one in four pupils expected to be in private

education by 2021.

BIA founders say they set it up to "create a high-performing school that would immediately change their children's lives and prepare them to succeed in life".

Whatever they set out to do, they disgracefully made a lot of money at the expense of ordinary Africans.

In Liberia "the PPP contract with Bridge International Academies costs 13 to 21 times more than government schools".

And "students were

expelled en masse from their original schools" to facilitate it.

The Nigerian High Court ordered the closure of 63 BIA schools because they were using unqualified teachers and had unsanitary learning conditions.

It's not the only time African governments have ordered the closure of BIA schools.

Widespread opposition to BIA saw the company take Kenyan teaching unions to court in 2016 in a bid to silence them.

IN BRIEF

Mears housing workers win 20%

OUTSOURCED Mears housing maintenance workers in Manchester have returned to work with a 20 percent pay rise.

The Unite union members had struck for 80 days since May 2017 because they were being paid up to £3,500 less than other workers employed directly by the council.

Cement workers set for strikes

SOME 240 Unite union members at Castle Cement plan to strike next Monday and Tuesday.

Bosses made them a two-year pay offer, which would have amounted a 1 percent increase this year.

The depots affected are Avonmouth, Bellshill, Birmingham, Clitheroe, King's Cross, Middlesbrough, Mold and Stamford.

Sweep away the Tube privatisers

OUTSOURCED cleaners on the London Underground were set to protest this Wednesday in their fight for equal rights at work.

The RMT union members are employed by contractor ABM.

Strikes at the end of the tunnel

TRAIN GUARDS on Northern and Merseyrail are set to strike on Saturday 3 March.

It is part of the RMT union members' long-running fight against driver only operation (DOO) trains, which will make train travel unsafe and inaccessible.

Tesco workers reject pay offer

OVER 700 workers for the Tesco supermarket chain are balloting for strikes over a two-year pay offer.

The Unite union members work at two distribution centres.

Tesco has 24 distribution centres in Britain.

The Usdaw union, which represents workers at 20 sites, has recommended its members accept.

Strike over mean time changes

WORKERS AT Royal Museums Greenwich struck last Saturday after talks over changes to their contracts failed to progress.

The changes include breaks becoming shorter and shifts falling within a larger period.

Workers had previously walked out on New Year's Day as part of the same dispute.

The workers' Prospect union has estimated the changes will result in effectively an extra three weeks work a year.

GRENFELL FIRE



THE JUSTICE4GRENFELL campaign's billboards drove through Westminster last Thursday, demanding truth and justice for those who died in the fire at Grenfell Tower. Their signs mimicked those of hit film *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*

Picture: Guy Smallman

CINEMA WORKERS

Picturehouse workers stage seven-day strike

by ALISTAIR FARROW

WORKERS AT five Picturehouse cinema sites in London walked out for seven days last Saturday.

They are members of the Bectu arm of the Prospect union. Their demands include the Living Wage of £10.20 an hour in London and £8.75 an hour outside London.

And they also want paternity pay, maternity pay and union recognition.

This phase of the dispute started in September 2016

On Monday workers protested outside the head office of Cineworld, the company which owns Picturehouse.

Lines

Picket lines have been called at a different site on each day of the strike.

There was only one picket line last Saturday—at the Hackney site in east London.

This meant that picket lines were not as well attended as they would have been had every site had a picket on each day.

Union officials have said this is because they can't provide enough stewards on



Protesting at Cineworld's offices

Picture: Guy Smallman

strike days. But workers could be stewards—and to suggest otherwise is patronising.

Officials have also said having one site as a focus for picketing maximises numbers—but there is little evidence of this.

"Management have been quiet this time round," said Picturehouse rep Sam.

That is apart from when they are trying to bribe people back into work with offers of doughnuts and food.

The latest round of strikes

comes as Cineworld prepares a bid to take over the US Regal cinema chain.

The deal will cost around £428 million and would be funded by piling debt onto the company.

Workers have crowdfunded for around £26,000 for the strike fund.

Sam said, "The money is there, we would not have gone through with this if we thought it was going to put financial pressure on the union."

●Sam is a pseudonym

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Cheshire fire fighters celebrate victory

FIRE FIGHTERS in Cheshire have forced bosses to step back from downgrading fire engines at two stations.

Bosses at the Labour-controlled Cheshire Fire Authority had planned to make the second fire engines at Crewe and Ellsmere Port stations "on call" instead of

"full time". This would have left fire crews relying on part time colleagues for back up or to respond to other fires.

Andrew Fox Hewitt is the FBU brigade secretary in Cheshire.

He said, "Activists knocked on doors and ran campaign stalls. It culminated in a

150-strong lobby of the authority."

He added, "We know the fight isn't over.

"We need to bring about a fit for purpose funding settlement from central government and we have to put an end to stockpiling of reserves by fire authorities."

POSTAL WORKERS

SOME WORKERS in Leeds are demanding a strike ballot

Protest demands a halt to Leeds postal office closure

ROYAL MAIL workers in Leeds protested last Saturday against the closure of their delivery office.

The CWU union members are resisting the closure of the Holbeck office.

It's one of several delivery offices marked for closure by Royal Mail bosses as part of a cost-cutting drive.

Asghar Khan, political officer in the CWU Leeds No 1 branch, said some workers wanted a strike ballot against the closure.

And speaking at the protest CWU rep Chris Allen said Royal Mail bosses "want to make a quick buck selling the Holbeck site. They are

asset strippers taking Royal Mail on a race to the bottom.

"We are not going to lie down, we're going to fight it all the way."

The protest comes ahead of a ballot on a deal made between CWU union leaders and Royal Mail to end a national dispute.

The deal involves trialing new working practices aimed at helping the bosses' drive to make Royal Mail more efficient.

Socialist Worker says union members should vote against the deal, which will leave thousands of workers with worse pensions and a real-terms pay cut.

TANK DRIVING INSTRUCTORS

WORKERS OPENED their salvo on Monday

Tank instructors want the bosses to shell out more

TANK DRIVING instructors in Bovington, Dorset, began a three-day strike on Monday.

The PCS union members train soldiers to drive tanks and armoured vehicles at the Babcock Armour Centre.

They voted to strike last year after rejecting a 2.4 percent below-inflation pay offer.

They are furious that their

wages have fallen in real terms by more than 5 percent while the company's profits have risen by more than £200 million since 2013.

Bosses increased their offer with benefits they said were worth an extra 0.4 percent following a strike last November. But workers overwhelmingly voted against it.

JUSTICE CAMPAIGNS

PROTESTERS arrested outside a major arms fair last year have been cleared by a district court.

Some 40 activists were charged with obstruction of the highway following a protest outside the Defence And Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms

fair in east London.

At least twelve of them have now been acquitted.

The DSEI arms fair showcases some of the most deadly weaponry. It is attended by representatives from British-backed human rights abusers such as Saudi Arabia.

EDUCATION

16 colleges ready to join the education strike wave

by SADIE ROBINSON

UCU UNION members across 16 colleges in England are set to hold a two-day strike starting on 28 February. They will join around 40,000 university workers who will be on strike that day over pensions.

College lecturers are fighting a below-inflation 1 percent pay offer. Their 48-hour strike will be followed by three days of action if bosses do not make any significant concessions.

Mandy Brown is a UCU rep at Lambeth College in south London and is on the union's national executive committee. She told Socialist Worker, "We've had no pay rise for seven years apart from 0.25 percent that no one really noticed."

"And our pay packets are smaller now because our pension contributions have gone up. But college CEOs are giving themselves big pay packets, so workers know there's money in the bank."

Described

"Lambeth College has been given £26 million by the Department for Education to encourage a merger. Just £1 million of that would give us a 3 percent pay rise."

The UCU has described the 1 percent offer as a "kick in the teeth".

It said that college workers have suffered a 23.6 percent real terms pay cut since 2008.

College lecturers voted by 92 percent for strikes on a turnout of 63



SHADOW CHANCELLOR John McDonnell (above) has pledged to support the UCU strikes. Now the vote has come in (left)

PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN AND SEAN VERNELL

percent. The strong vote met the Tories' 50 percent turnout threshold and shows the scale of anger that exists.

"The Tories' anti-union laws have spectacularly backfired," said Mandy. "They have made us more organised than we have ever been before."

The strike will also take place on the day of a protest for education in London. It has the potential to be huge.

Mandy said there's a buoyant mood among many college workers. "At Capital City College Group, members passed a vote of no confidence in the CEO," she said.

"He resigned the next day. People feel galvanised and are prepared to fight."

●Defend education—march for pensions and pay. Wednesday 28 February, 12 noon, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY. See the Facebook event page for more details.

THE COLLEGES set to strike are City and Islington College, College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, Westminster Kingsway, City of Westminster, College of North West London, Hackney, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets, Croydon, Epping Forest, Havering, Lambeth, Richmond-upon-Thames, Sandwell, Sunderland and Sussex Coast College Hastings.

SCHOOLS

Newham schools out to stop the academisers

NEU UNION members at three east London schools were set to strike together on Thursday of this week.

Workers at Cumberland, Avenue and Keir Hardie schools in Newham are fighting plans to turn their schools into academies.

For NEU members at Avenue it was the third day of a three-day walkout.

The coordinated action follows a series of strikes at Cumberland and Avenue against the plans. Strikers say the plan puts children's education at risk in the poorest borough in Britain.

Cumberland teaching assistant Nishi told Socialist Worker, "Privatisation is not good for staff or children."

"I'm worried about what might happen to special educational needs teaching. But if we all stick together, we can win."

NEU rep Carolyn said the academy plan was a "mockery". "It's a very upsetting and difficult situation," she said.

She added that the fight has pulled more people into the union.

Parents have supported strikers and are also fighting the academy plans. The Newham Against Academisation campaign plans to lobby Newham council on Monday of next week from 6pm.

●Send messages of support to assistant.secretary.nta@gmail.com

Workers are not doorMATs

WORKERS BEGAN a three-day strike at The Village School in Brent, west London, on Tuesday of this week. The action, by NEU union members, is against a plan to turn the school into an academy.

It comes ahead of a planned strike by three schools in Newham on Thursday over the same issue.

The school could become part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). The strikes have forced the local Labour council to oppose the academy plan.

Barry Gardiner MP held a packed meeting of parents, staff and local residents before half term.

Council leader Muhammed Butt backed the strike.

Workers came from Woodfield school, which is already an academy. They



On the picket line

said conditions had got worse since academisation.

Governors are set to meet on Wednesday 28 February to decide whether to go ahead with academisation.

Workers plan a two-day strike from Tuesday of next week to coincide with the meeting and pile pressure on governors to oppose the plan.

●Send messages of support to hank.roberts@neu.org.uk

●Presents protest against academies in Barnsley. See bit.ly/2Gud9ea

No more waiting for weighting

NEU UNION members at Connaught School for Girls in east London are preparing to strike in a dispute over pay.

Teachers have been balloted over the payment of an Inner London allowance as an Outer London school. This is the first time a school in an outer London area has been balloted over the question.

Teachers voted for strikes on a 96 percent turnout. They plan their first walkout on Tuesday of next week.

Teachers believe that the current outer London allowance is not enough.

NEU members at the school have argued that it should pay the Inner London allowance—this is already being paid by other schools in Waltham Forest.

NHS

West London rallies against health cuts

AROUND 200 people rallied to defend the NHS in Ealing Town Hall in west London last Tuesday night. The rally was called by the Ealing Save Our NHS campaign.

Speakers included local Labour MP Rupa Huq.

Powerful health campaigns in west London pushed the Labour-run councils in Ealing and Hammersmith & Fulham to support their fight.

The Labour council in Hammersmith & Fulham plans a public meeting in the town hall on 28 February.

The fight can't just be left to local campaigns—there needs to be a national fight fully supported by the unions now.

■**AROUND 100 patient transport workers in Greater Manchester are balloting for strikes in a fight for equal pay and terms and conditions.**

Some of the Unison union members are paid up to £2.40 an hour less than other workers, get fewer breaks and receive less sick pay. A third of workers were hired on worse terms when the service was run by privatiser Arriva between 2013 and 2016.

CONSTRUCTION

No block to strike

WORKERS AT Tarmac Building Products Ltd struck on Tuesday against plans to start a two-tier workforce.

The workers make concrete breeze blocks.

The plan to strike on Thursday and again on 20 and 22 March.

FIGHTING THE CUTS

Swansea is shaken by anti-cuts rally

THERE WAS a big shift in Swansea last Saturday. All Swansea area Labour MPs, alongside assembly members, council leaders, activists and victims of austerity united in a protest against Tory cuts.

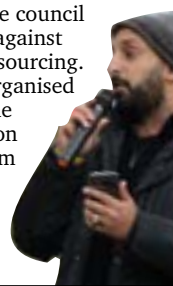
Around 150 people gathered in Swansea's public square to listen to speeches. Trade unionists from Unison, CWU and PCS attended.

The Tories were the main focus of attacks from the speakers but so were the Labour council's cuts.

A speaker from Stand Up To Racism argued that the fight against austerity can't be separated from the fight against racism.

Swansea Unison has called a lobby of the council on 1 March against cuts and outsourcing. It has also organised a coach to the demonstration against racism on 17 March in Cardiff.

Martin Chapman



Neezo was one of the speakers

TORIES' TUITION FEE TROUBLES

by NICK CLARK

STUDENT activists demanded that university tuition fees should be scrapped as Theresa May announced an “overhaul” of university funding on Monday.

May tacitly admitted that the tuition fees system isn't working.

Unsurprisingly universities have almost uniformly charged the maximum £9,250 fees for every course since the cap was first raised to £9,000 in 2011 and then pushed higher.

May hinted that fees for some courses could be lowered.

Funding

But Sheffield Hallam student Sophie Squire said, “I've heard that May is going to promise more funding for sciences and engineering. But what about nursing?”

“Student nurses don't have a bursary anymore so now they have to pay for three or four years of university study and training in a hospital.”

But the Tories ruled out



STUDENTS MARCH for free education in London last November

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

scrapping tuition fees before the review even began—meaning students will still be saddled with crushing debt.

Birmingham City student Frankie Barrett said, “I'm going to be something like

£50,000 in debt. Students just accept that we're never going to be able to pay it all back. It's like an impossible number hanging over you.”

And Sophie said, “It's sad because for students who

start university now, they've grown up accepting that you have to pay maybe more than £9,000 a year.

“Probably you won't even get the job that you trained for at the end of it. It means

that students are demoralised as soon as they start studying.”

And the review promises to promote a “dynamic market” in universities—education for profit. Sophie said the timing

of May's announcement was “suspicious”.

Some 40,000 UCU union members at more than 60 universities are set to strike from this Thursday.

Concessions

It could be the start of a fight for more concessions on university education than May will deliver.

Education should be free and open to everyone throughout their lives—not treated as a commodity, or simply training for work.

Sophie said, “Lots of people go to university now because capitalism needs a more educated workforce.”

“But education should be about fulfilment and choice. University should be free because people should have the right to choose to learn.”

“The Tories just see education as a commodity,” she added.

“You can't trust a Tory government to deliver better education.”

More online

For a longer version, go to bit.ly/2BE8VBH

WELFARE

Disabled people suffer over one million benefit sanctions under Tory rule

by SADIE ROBINSON

DISABLED benefit claimants have suffered over a million sanctions since the Tories came to office in 2010.

More than 900,000 disabled people who claim jobseeker's allowance (JSA) have been sanctioned.

The shocking figures from the Demos think tank suggest that disabled claimants are being discriminated against.

They showed that disabled JSA claimants are up to 53 percent more likely to be sanctioned



Protest by Disabled People Against the Cuts

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

than a claimant who isn't disabled.

Sanctions mean benefits can be cut from claimants for weeks at a time. The first “failure” for JSA claimants can lead to a four-week sanction.

Subsequent sanctions last 13 weeks, then can be as long as three years.

They can be imposed for the slightest “offence” such as being late to an appointment.

These sanctions cause more stress for claimants and can make existing conditions worse.

The Tories claim they are trying to help disabled people into jobs. It's a joke

from the government that shut down the Remploy factories that employed disabled people.

In reality the sanctions regime pressures people to look for jobs even if they aren't well enough to work.

Push

It is also part of a wider ideological push against the welfare state.

Unsurprisingly, the Demos research concluded that the sanctions didn't help disabled people find work. But the government dismissed the findings.

Figures last summer showed that the Tories

have spent nearly £40 million in court battles to try and stop disabled people receiving benefits. It lost the vast majority of them.

Meanwhile the Tories are ploughing ahead with the rollout of Universal Credit. This replaces six other benefits and will make life harder for claimants.

The Disabled People Against Cuts (Dpac) group is holding a day of action against Universal Credit on Thursday of next week.

In London, protesters will gather at 11am at the visitors' entrance to the House of Commons.